

Palestinians protest to U.N. over city status for settlement

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Palestinian U.N. observer Nasser Al Kidwa asked the U.N. Security Council on Thursday to condemn Israel for upgrading a West Bank settlement to city status, saying the action amounted to unlawful annexation.

In a letter to the council president, Sir Jeremy Greenstock of Britain, Al Kidwa said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attended a ceremony on Wednesday conferring city status on the settlement of Ariel.

Al Kidwa quoted Netanyahu as saying it would be "part of Israel in any final status agreement in the future," adding "we will continue at this pace and build up this city more

and more and more." There was no indication when the Security Council would act on the request for condemnation.

Earlier on Thursday, Netanyahu joined talks with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on advancing the Middle East peace process.

Al Kidwa said Israeli settlement activities were illegal under international law and that they violated the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

"The step of de facto annexation, however, is even more dangerous and necessitates immediate condemnation by the

international community," he said.

"The actions and the statements made by the prime minister in this regard are absolutely unacceptable, they have no legal validity," Al Kidwa said.

He also complained that the Israeli authorities laid a cornerstone on Wednesday for the future construction of a settlement at Tel Rumeida, in the city of Hebron.

"This illegal, provocative act comes at a time of increasing tension and conflict in the city, including the criminal activities of Israeli settlers," Al Kidwa said.

He said a 21-year-old Palestinian man was killed and 20 other Palestinians

injured in clashes with Israeli troops on Wednesday in Hebron, called Al Khalil in Arabic.

"These are serious developments, which require the attention and action by the Security Council and the secretary-general of the United Nations," Al Kidwa said.

Hebron, home to more than 100,000 Palestinians and about 400 Israelis, was split into Israeli- and Palestinian-controlled sectors under a January 1997 peace agreement.

Israel decided to erect permanent housing to replace caravans at Tel Rumeida after a rabbi was shot dead there in August by suspected Palestinian gunmen.



ISRAELIS ARREST WOUNDED PALESTINIAN: An Israeli soldier Friday arrests a Palestinian after he was shot in the leg by a rubber-coated metal bullet during the third straight day of clashes in Hebron. The Palestinian was treated by the soldiers after his arrest and then taken away in an Israeli army ambulance (Reuters photo)

Prosecutors mulling death penalty in U.S. embassy bombings

NEW YORK (AFP) — Federal prosecutors said here Thursday that they were "seriously" considering seeking the death penalty against suspects charged in the bombings last August of two U.S. embassies in Africa.

The possible penalty emerged in Manhattan federal court as three defendants were arraigned on an indictment charging them with a sweeping conspiracy to kill Americans under the leadership of Islamist Osama Ben Laden.

Wadhi Al Haje, Mohammad Sadek Odeh and Mohammad Rashed Daoud Al Owahli entered pleas of innocent.

But during questioning by U.S. District Court Judge Leonard Sand about the case, Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald revealed that the government was considering seeking the death penalty.

"The death penalty will be seriously considered for this case," Fitzgerald said. "That decision will take some time."

Twelve Americans were among the 258 who died in twin bombings in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam two months ago.

Kuwait advises U.S. to apologise for Sudan bombing

CAIRO (AP) — The United States should admit that it was wrong in bombing a Sudanese pharmaceutical plant and apologise to Sudan, Kuwait's foreign minister was quoted Friday as saying.

American claims that the plant produced materials for chemical weapons "were not proven true," the minister, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, told the London-based Al Hayat newspaper.

"It is for those who make mistakes to admit their mistakes and present their apologies," he said.

Kuwait, a leading U.S. ally in the Gulf, signed a defence pact with the United States after American-led forces drove Iraqi troops out of Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf war.

Washington attacked the pharmaceutical plant in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, in retaliation for attacks against U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania on Aug. 7. It said the plant produced precursors for chemical weapons, a charge Sudan has denied.

Shortly after the attack, Kuwait indirectly criticised Washington, saying that the fight against terrorism should be waged through international bodies like the United Nations.

Sudan army claims southern town retaken from rebels

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan's army on Friday claimed to have retaken from rebels the southern town of Liria, driving them and their alleged Ugandan backers from strategic areas in Eastern Equatoria state.

The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which Khartoum insists is supported by Kampala, took Liria, Nengala and other areas in Eastern Equatoria in a major offensive in mid-September.

The army, having retaken Nengala some two weeks ago, won Liria back on Wednesday, according to an army communique broadcast on state-owned radio Omdurman on Friday.

"All pockets on the Torit-Juba road, including Liria sector, Jebel Milih and Jebel Cotton, have been purged and the armed forces have managed to drive the rebels and Ugandans away," the communique said.

A supply route from Uganda was being monitored, it added.

The recapture of Liria was also reported by a commander of pro-government militia reportedly involved in the action.

"The [government] armed forces, the popular defence and the South Sudan Defence Force (SSDF) recaptured at noon Wednesday the Liria area, which was under Ugandan forces' control since mid-September, in a fierce battle that took more than 48 hours," SSDF chief-of-staff Eliza Hon told the Al Rai Al Aam daily.

"The government troops have inflicted heavy losses in lives, machinery and ammunition on 'the enemy who fled in retreat towards the Ugandan territories,'" Hon said.

On Thursday, the SPLA announced a three-month extension of its ceasefire in the southern Bahr Al Ghazal region from Oct. 14 and expanded it to include the Western Upper Nile region, also in the south.

The SPLA and the Khartoum government both announced three-month

ceasefires in their 15-year-old civil war in mid-July, with the SPLA's covering Bar Al Ghazal and the government's covering the entire south.

But the two sides are fighting in Eastern Equatoria, with the rebels bidding to capture the government stronghold of Juba, the biggest city in the south.

Splinter groups made up of former rebels are fighting in the Western Upper Nile region, north of Juba.

An SPLA communique issued in Nairobi said the ceasefire extension followed an appeal by Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi and was a reaction to widespread famine in southern Sudan.

The SPLA also urged the international community to pressure the government of President Omar Al Bashir "to lift the ban it has imposed on humanitarian assistance to areas in the south, Nuba mountains and southern Blue Nile [state] so that food and other relief services can reach the needy population."

Truce panel to discuss ceasefire violations in south Lebanon

TYRE (AFP) — The international committee monitoring the ceasefire in southern Lebanon is to meet next week to hear Lebanese and Israeli complaints of alleged truce violations, officials said Friday.

The five-nation committee will convene on Tuesday at the United Nations headquarters in the Lebanese coastal town of Naqoura near the Israeli border, the officials said.

Lebanon accused Israel of

damaging three homes and two cars during an artillery barrage on the village of Barasheet, which is adjacent to the Israeli-occupied border zone in southern Lebanon.

Beirut considered the shelling a violation of the April 1996 ceasefire accord which bans combatants from targeting civilians on both sides of the Lebanese-Israeli border or carrying out attacks from civilian-populated areas.

Israel, for its part, accused anti-Israeli guerrillas of

launching an attack on an Israeli army patrol inside the occupied border area from inside civilian locations.

The truce committee, which comprises the United States, France, Lebanon, Syria and Israel, has met 24 times since the beginning of 1998.

Fourteen Lebanese civilians have been killed and 82 others wounded in south Lebanon this year while another 10 civilians were wounded in northern Israel, according to an AFP count.

Steps taken to ensure judiciary's independence — council judge

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The president of the Higher Judicial Council has said concrete steps are being taken by judges and government officials to ensure the independence of the judiciary.

Judge Taher Hikmat, during a lecture earlier this week to a group of representatives of national and international associations, pointed out that "there has been a historical struggle by judges to maintain and strengthen the judiciary's independence to ensure its validity and operation away from pressure and interference."

Although a 1972 law granted the judiciary independence, ministers of justice still "enjoy wide authority that exceeds their theoretical powers, and some of them abuse their powers," he said.

"If we look at it from a theoretical viewpoint, the Ministry of Justice does not have a strong effect on the Judicial Council, but from a practical point of view, the effect of the minister of justice is strong. It is a historical reality," he said.

He added that the minister has the authority to recommend appointing,

retiring or disciplining judges, either directly or through his role in disciplinary councils.

"This makes us wonder to what extent the law accomplishes judicial independence," he said.

Calls for judicial independence and reform have come over the past few years from His Majesty King Hussein. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, and many prominent judges, lawyers and human rights activists.

In May 1998, during celebrations marking 45 years of constitutional powers, the King said: "There are gaps, shortcomings and defects [in the judiciary] that need to be reformed and need to be focused on so that the judiciary will become what we wish it to be."

In a letter sent in early 1997 to then Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, the King instructed the government to take measures to guarantee the independence of the judiciary.

The King said these measures should be taken as soon as possible to ensure that the judicial system in Jordan would be capable of shouldering its duties and continuing to serve as a model of integrity and independence.

A former Higher Court chief, Farouq Kilani, accused governments of interfering in the judiciary and of "putting pressure on judges to rule in accordance with government wishes."

After his appointment in May, Hikmat, who is also the head of the Court of Cassation, pledged to modernise the judiciary.

In his lecture he said the judiciary's independence has been recognised since 1928.

The current 1952 Constitution, according to Hikmat, states: "The nation is the source of all powers and it exercises those powers according to the law."

The judiciary is not a part of the executive authority, "but rather it is an independent authority on par with the executive and legislative authorities."

Laws on the judiciary's independence were issued in 1955 and 1972 he said.

Hikmat called for protecting judges from the media and public opinion in order to ensure their objectivity.

The judge was addressing members of the Jordan Bar Association, the Wales and British Bar Associations, and the Arab Lawyers Union.

JORDAN TELEVISION Tel. 477311-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 ..Cartoon — Animaniacs
15:30 ..Clowning Around
16:00 ..Drama — Neighbours
16:30 ..Doc — Pear Pressure
17:00 French Programme — "Faut Pas Rever"
18:00 ..Drama — Wind at My Back (Ep. 6)
19:00 ..Le Journal
19:15 French Programme — "L'oeuf de Colomb"
19:30 ..News headlines
19:35 ..Murphy Brown
20:00 ..Today's Health
20:30 ..Sirens
21:05 Drama — ABC of Democracy
22:00 ..News in English
22:30 ..Feature film — "After the Silence"
23:59 ..Twisted (Ep.3)
00:30 ..End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:14 ..Fajr
05:31 ..(Sunrise) Duha
11:23 ..Dhuhr
14:41 ..Asr
17:15 ..Maghreb
18:31 ..Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

4624590

Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh
Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

ment of Meteorology

Moderate to hot weather conditions will prevail with winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be relatively hot and occasional dusty, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min/Max temp.

Amman ..17/30
Aqaba ..23/35
Deserts ..15/33
Jordan Valley ..23/36

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 32 Aqaba 34. Humidity readings: Amman 21 per cent, Aqaba 50 per cent.

Following are the highest temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun ..25
Jerash ..31
Um Qays ..30
Madaba ..29
Petra ..31
Dead Sea ..36

Dr. Mukhlis Halaseh ..5519220

Dr. Rami Sukkar ..585457

Dr. Mohammad Labadeh ..5167914

Firas pharmacy ..5661912

Al Asema pharmacy ..4637055

Nairouth pharmacy ..4636762

Al Salam pharmacy ..4636730

Yacoub pharmacy ..4644945

Shmeisani pharmacy ..4637660

Najib pharmacy ..53477632

IRBID:

Dr. Ali Shogair ..7100069

Al Quds pharmacy ..(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Issa Al Omari ..901266

Khalifeh pharmacy ..985417

ry assistance) ..121

Overseas Calls ..010230

Central Amman Telephone

Repairs ..4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs ..5661101

Jordan Television ..4773111

Al Hikma Modern Hospital ..4774111

Water Authority ..5680100

J. Electricity Authority ..5815615

Electric Power Co. ..4636381

RJ Flight Information ..44-53200

Queen Alia Int. Airport ..44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199

The Islamic Abdul ..5666131/7

Hussain Medical Centre Tel. 5856856

Luzilla ..4630195

Khalidi Maternity ..4642816

Akileh Maternity ..4642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity ..4642362

Malhas, J. Amman ..4636140

Palestine. Shmeisani ..5607071

Shmeisani Hospital ..5669131

University Hospital ..5353444

Al-Muasher Hospital 5667279

Al-Ahli, Abdali ..5664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen ..4777101/3

Al-Bashir ..4775111/26

Army, Marka ..8916111/5

Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50

Amal Hospital ..5674155

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital

(09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital

(09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital ..(09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital

(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital

(02)275555

Greek Catholic Hospital

(02)272275

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital

(02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital

(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA

INTERNATIONAL

AIRPORT

This information is supplied by

Royal Jordanian (RJ) information

department at the Queen Alia

International Airport Tel.

(44)53200 where it should always

be verified. Information on other

flights is obtained on telephone

(44) 52700 or (44) 523250.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

05:50 ..Tehran (RJ)

07:30 ..Damascus (RJ)

07:50 ..Aden (RJ)

08:45 ..New Delhi (RJ)

09:25 ..Beirut (RJ)

09:30 ..Karachi, Dubai (RJ)

09:45 ..Doha, Bahrain (RJ)

10:20 ..Colombo (RJ)

14:55 ..New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

16:30 ..London (RJ)

20:20 ..Cairo (RJ)

21:55 ..Milan, Rome (RJ)

22:40 ..Madrid (add) (RJ)

22:50 ..Berlin, Frankfurt (RJ)

23:55 ..Paris (RJ)

04:30 ..Bangkok (RJ)

Other Flights

05:05 London, Damascus (BA)

12:00 ..Riyadh (SV)

13:10 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)

14:05 ..Vienna (OS)

15:25 ..Dubai, Muscat (EK)

17:40 ..Beirut (ME)

18:00 ..Paris (AF)

18:05 ..Frankfurt (LH)

22:35 ..Cairo (MS)

22:40 ..Amsterdam (KL)

00:05 London, Damascus (BA)

01:05 ..Belgrade (JU)

02:00 ..Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW)

09:20 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA

Shbeilat says will continue activities

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Leith Shbeilat, who was released on Thursday after eight months in prison for inciting riots in February, Friday said he will continue to air his views and fight corruption.

"I will continue to express my opinion and fight for people's rights," Shbeilat told the Jordan Times Friday.

Shbeilat was sentenced to nine months in prison on May 12 following his conviction by the State Security Court of inciting the Ma'an riots in February which left one person dead and dozens injured.

Shbeilat, a former president of the Jordan Engineers Association, was pardoned by His Majesty King Hussein during a surprise visit to the Professional Associations in May.

But since his initial sentence then was not final, he declined the pardon.

Shbeilat who has often been criticised for being a loner, told the newspapers Thursday he would prefer to work within a group.

"I am willing to work with groups to fulfil people's political, social and economic rights. I am willing to establish a political party or a political movement," he said.

Shbeilat was sentenced to life in 1992 after being convicted by the State Court of treason and three years in 1994 for lese majeste. He was pardoned by the King in both cases.

Shbeilat, 56, was arrested by authorities on February 20 while returning from Ma'an after delivering a sermon at a mosque a day before pro-Iraq riots broke out in the southern town.



HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, talks with officials and academics at a meeting Thursday (Photo by Boghos)

Regent urges academics to be more active in public affairs

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, has called on the Jordanian academic sector to play a more effective role in dealing with public issues and to contribute to the creation of platforms for objective and balanced dialogue based on accurate information, research and analysis.

In remarks at a meeting Thursday with a number of academics and university presidents, the Regent said a database is a main prerequisite for achieving socio-economic development.

The meeting, which was attended by Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh, the speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, Sa'd Hayel Srour, and Cabinet ministers and officials, was one of a series of contacts that Prince Hassan has initiated in order to meet various sectors for dialogues dedicated to highlighting the importance of "responsible partnership."

The Regent also underlined the importance of academics contributing to public life and playing a more effective role in civic society.

Prince Hassan urged the academics to consider efficiency and competence as the criteria for evaluating achievements on a non-discriminatory basis.

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Prime minister reaffirms role of Jordan Armed Forces

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh on Thursday dismissed recent statements by the Syrian defence minister on the Jordan Armed Forces and said no party could doubt its "well-known" role.

In a statement carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Tarawneh said: "The Jordan Armed Forces are still called the Arab Army because they represent the army of the Great Arab Revolt, which stands out as the symbol and embodies the dignity and the steadfastness of the Nation."

Tarawneh's remarks followed a statement by Information Minister Nasser Judeh

last Tuesday condemning Syrian Defence Minister Mustafa Tlass' comments "doubting the Kingdom's role in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and offending Jordan, the Jordanian people and some Jordanian tribes."

In his remarks, the prime minister said: "Our armed forces do not need testimony from any party outside the Kingdom, particularly if that party is marked by deficiency. Our armed forces will continue to shield Jordan, and no one can ever belittle their role."

Meanwhile, notables from

the Enjaday and Mahlaf tribes in the Qweirah region in southern Jordan on Friday denounced Tlass' statements against Jordan and the Armed Forces.

In a statement published Friday, they said the Syrian minister's statements were "astonishing" because he had earlier praised the role of the tribes in the Great Arab Revolt.

Representatives of the Bani Sakhr tribe, one of the largest in Jordan, also criticised Tlass' statements as an attempt to cast doubt on Jordan's stand towards the Arab Nation.

A statement signed by thousands of tribe members said:

"We strongly condemn Tlass' statements about Jordan and its people and armed forces as irresponsible and an attempt to belittle the country's role. We will not allow anyone to defame our national stand and the sacrifices we offered in defence of the Syrian Golan Heights."

"It is regrettable to hear Tlass' statements at a time when the Hashemite leadership is displaying its keenness on bolstering inter-Arab solidarity in the face of the looming danger posed to the interests of the Arab and Islamic nations."

Seminar urges inter-Arab cooperation to achieve human development

By Hind-Lara Mango

MANAMA — More inter-Arab and international cooperation is needed for equitable human development, Arab media representatives and human development specialists recommended at the end of a regional seminar in Manama, Bahrain.

Participants at the meeting on human development and the media in Arab countries also endorsed a proposal by Her Royal Highness Princess Basma, United Nations honorary ambassador on Human Development, for an annual Arab regional human development report.

The proposed report would monitor development processes and formulate human development strategies in the Arab World.

The forum, which ended on Wednesday, called for "active strategic thinking" in changing negative consumption attitudes in the region, rather than specific solutions to specific problems.

The two-day media seminar focused on consumption patterns highlighted by the United Nations Development Program's annual human development report (HDR), which examines how countries are faring in terms of children's nutrition and education, accessibility to clean water, and how women participate in the economy.

This year's HDR report, which used consumption as its theme, discovered huge consumption discrepancies all over the world.

According to the meeting, the richest fifth of the world's population consumes 86 per cent of all goods and services, while the poorest fifth consumes just 1.3 per cent.

The Arab World's consumption patterns were described as "being very high with an uneven distribution within the region and within individual countries of the region."

Meat and car consumption in Arab countries were considered to be very high in relation to international figures.

It was noted that the Arab World now has 10 million cars compared to two million in 1975 — a very high figure according to international standards.

"Indeed, the richest fifth consumes 45 per cent of all meat

and fish, 58 per cent of all energy used and 84 per cent of all paper, has 74 per cent of all telephone lines and owns 87 per cent of all vehicles," said Richard Jolly, principal author and coordinator of the HDR.

According to Jolly, each American consumes an average of 600 kilograms of meat annually compared with 14 kilograms in Bangladesh.

Participants said it was not only the responsibility of individuals but also of governments to limit negative consumption patterns to avoid local and international environmental impacts.

The seminar stressed the need for the media to play a greater role in raising consumer awareness and of the importance of integrating positive consumption patterns in the educational systems of Arab states.

"We need to educate our children and our public on what it is exactly they are consuming, and whether or not it is harmful to them and to their environment," said Bassam Snobar, vice president of the Jordan University for Science and Technology.

To support environmental friendly policies, the seminar recommended restructuring taxes into environmental benefits and introducing an eco-tax on goods.

"An average Jordanian pays 128 different types of taxes, and every five people in the country own a car," said Iyad Abumoghli, director of the Environment and Natural Resources Program at the UNDP in Jordan.

Taxes, he suggested, should be increased on new vehicles, which in turn would discourage people from buying new cars and prompt them to use public transport. This, he argued, would help decrease fuel consumption and in turn create less negative environmental impacts.

"Eco-tax money could be used for environmental purposes," Abumoghli said.

In his paper on the impact of the consumption of natural resources on the environment in Arab countries, Abumoghli called for the establishment of an inter-Arab research centre for environmental studies.

He stressed the importance of the centre in dealing with issues such as water scarcity in the region.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Princess Basma opens bazaar

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma on Thursday opened a bazaar at Al Hussein Sports City with the participation of 50 Arab and foreign diplomatic missions in Jordan. The proceeds will go to Maharrat Um Al Hussein to help support 150 orphans. Princess Basma toured the bazaar's various displays, which included embroideries and artifacts.

Maronite patriarch arrives

AMMAN (Petra) — Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir, head of the Maronite Church of Antioch and the Orient, arrived here Friday on a 10-day visit, during which he will hold talks with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent and senior Jordanian officials. Patriarch Sfeir will also preside over a five-day conference to open Sunday to discuss preparations for the year 2000 celebrations.

House speaker receives Saudi official

AMMAN (Petra) — The speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, Sa'd Hayel Srour, on Thursday received Saudi health ministry Secretary General Qadi Maqboul. Srour and the Saudi official discussed means of bolstering bilateral ties in various fields.

FILM

* Children's film "Dizzy, lieber Dizzy" (in German) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman at 5:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Works by Lamia Jamal at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until Oct. 26.

* Art of Arab calligraphy by Nassar Mansour at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (Tel. 4630128), until Oct. 23.

* Amman Seventh International Book Exhibit at the City Hall, Ras Al 'Ain, until Oct. 10.

Endangered ibex released into wildlife reserve

By Ahmad Khatib

WADI MUJEB — Twenty endangered Nubian ibex bred in captivity were released Thursday into the Mujeb Nature Reserve to supplement the country's small natural population.

The ibex were released under a reintroduction plan sponsored by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature and partially funded by the Japanese government, which granted \$50,000 to provide facilities and equipment for the herd.

"My government has taken the responsibility to protect rare and endangered species as part of Japan's contribution to nature conservation," Japanese Ambassador Koichi Matsumoto told the press. "I would like to stress that Japan will continue to support environmental projects in Jordan."

A breeding programme for ibex was set up by the society in 1989, following the construction of large breeding enclosure in the Raddas area. From a beginning of 20 animals brought from the U.S., the captive herd has increased to some 150 ibex.

In a similar activity in

1978, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the World Wildlife Fund contributed four oryx brought from the San Diego Animal Park to the non-governmental society, which runs six major nature reserves covering 1,000-square kilometres and plans to set up seven more.

By 1997, the 22-square-kilometre Shumari Wildlife Reserve had boosted the population to a healthy 200. Thirteen of them were released into the wild in 1983.

"One of our concerns is protecting threatened species from extinction," Society President Anis Muasher said during a seven-hour tour of Wadi Mujeb. "We want citizens to be convinced of the local and global importance of these animals."

Wadi Mujeb is the main part of the river system flowing through the 215-square-kilometre Mujeb Nature Reserve, which was established in 1986.

The government recently announced plans to construct a diversion dam at the point where Wadi Mujeb meets Wadi Waleh, in the heart of the reserve.

The project is part of the

JD180 million Integrated Project to Develop the Southern Ghor Area. A consortium of international and local companies have signed four agreements worth JD6.4 million with the Ministry of Water and Irrigation to supervise and provide architectural services in the implementation of the project.

The dam will channel virtually all the river water into a rock tunnel and pipe system to supply new hotels along the shoreline of the Dead Sea and the Arab Potash Company as well as irrigate agriculture in Ghor Safi.

But the society, which has proposed several alternative schemes for the diversion dam and is awaiting the government's response, said this project will "destroy" the reserve.

"We are not against taking water, but at the same time the government has to take environment conservation into consideration, especially since there are many alternatives," Society Director General Khaled Irani told the press Thursday.

According to Irani, the Wadi Mujeb Environmental Impact Assessment, which was conducted by a local

independent consulting firm, revealed that "the proposed diversion weir [dam] will be the most damaging project to the area."

According to the society, the dam project, which will include constructing tunnels, roads and other installations, will "change the physical and chemical conditions, such as the speed of the water flow and oxygen levels, which poses a threat to the special ecological value of the wadi system."

"Species living in and around the river downstream from the weir will be destroyed, since the river bed will be dry for 80 per cent of the year because of the dam," said a society report.

"The area has a great potential as a tourist attraction, and unless it is protected, Jordan will lose the environment and tourism," said Irani.

Society Director of Conservation Chris Johnson said the Kingdom in 1993 signed the biodiversity convention in Rio de Janeiro, which committed the country to protecting its biological resources.

"The world community gave Jordan financing to help support Mujeb in recognition of its international impor-

importance," said Johnson. "Honestly, saving Mujeb, which is the one [area] left that has any of the quality that could be called natural, will help give the next generation a better future."

Muasher said Jordan can protect nature and exploit its water resources without harming environmental "treasures."

"The government promised us it would carefully study the project but it did not," Muasher told the Jordan Times. "This is unacceptable and it will harm the country. The society did it best regarding the issue but unfortunately the government's cooperation is not practical."

Muasher said many studies have shown that "the society's alternative proposal for the dam is feasible."

Minister of Water and Irrigation Hani Mulki earlier said "the dam will not be constructed at the expense of the environment, and this is the most important thing."

Jordan Valley Authority Secretary General Dureid Mahasneh stressed that environment, sustainable development and water issues must be integrated.

"Around JD15 million will

be available to ensure environment protection in the Jordan Valley," he said. "Environment is important, but we must not forget our water needs."

He added that the Jordan Valley Authority was still waiting for its consultants' report on the dam project, and "the society will be heavily involved in taking the final decision."

Mujeb, which sits on the Great Rift Valley linking Africa with Asia, forms a safe place for migratory birds and is home to at least 10 globally threatened species.

According to the society, Mujeb is one of the cleanest and least disturbed river systems left in Jordan. It is part of the water catchment for the Dead Sea and always has flowing water, even in the summer. It flows out to the Dead Sea through a narrow sandstone gorge lined with palm trees and lush vegetation.

Operating under the patronage of His Majesty King Hussein, the non-governmental society was formed in 1966 and is responsible for protecting the Kingdom's natural resources, wildlife and wild areas.

Delegation to study Swedish experience in helping domestic violence victims

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — An official delegation leaves for Stockholm today to visit Swedish women and children shelters and review the Swedish experience in helping victims of domestic violence.

"The aim of the visit is to examine the Swedish experience in the fields of human and women's rights and to observe the shelters, their plans and personnel training," said Mo'men Hadidi, head of the National Institute for Forensic Medicine, who is leading the three-member delegation.

Hadidi said the delegation will determine how the shelters deal with women victims of domestic violence, "especially since many

similar cases in Jordan end in killings in the name of family honour."

Between 25 to 30 women are killed each year in the Kingdom in the name of family honour.

A total of 25 women were killed last year in Jordan, mostly on suspicion of illicit relationships. This year, 15 women reportedly have so far been murdered by male relatives to cleanse the family's honour.

Hadidi said the delegation, invited by the Swedish government, will report back to Minister of Social Development Mohammad Khair Mamer on the Swedish experience and "how Jordan could benefit from it."

"We will submit a report to explain the need to train and reha-

bitate staff to set up similar shelters in Jordan," Hadidi told the Jordan Times.

In May 1998, the Ministry of Social Development announced plans to set up the first centre in Jordan to shelter abused women, including those kept in protective custody in prisons.

The shelter, according to Hadidi, is aimed at housing victims of rape, those threatened by honour crimes and battered women.

Many women are forced to spend indefinite terms in the country's correctional facilities under what the state terms "administrative detention," but what is actually protection from being killed by family members.

A study by the Public Security

Department listed 4,962 cases of violence against women registered with the police during 1991 and 1992.

Sociologists and experts have blamed rapid socio-economic and political changes and increasing poverty and unemployment for the increase of violence against women and children.

Accompanying Hadidi on the one-week visit are Captain Sawzan Tayan from the PSD and Fadia Bisharat from the Ministry of Social Development.

On Thursday, the PSD and the Ministry of Social Development signed an agreement to cooperate and coordinate efforts in cases of domestic violence.

According to the agreement,

social researchers and experts were assigned to the PSD Family Protection Unit, established in September 1997 to deal with domestic violence cases.

Also on Thursday, representatives from governmental and non-governmental organisations discussed a report on the unit's functions and needs prepared by British experts during a recent two-week visit.

The meeting was attended by PSD Director Lieutenant General Nasouh Muhieddin, Major General Mohammad Tarazi, and representatives from the office of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, the Ministry of Social Development, the Jordan River Foundation, the judiciary and forensic medicine experts.

Holbrooke in 11th hour talks, tells Milosevic NATO ready to act

BELGRADE (AFP) — U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke held 11th hour talks Friday with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, warning him NATO was "intensifying preparations for action" to force an end to Belgrade's offensive in Kosovo.

"There has been no change in the situation ... it remains extremely serious," Holbrooke told journalists in Belgrade before going into the new talks shortly after midday (1000 GMT).

"NATO continues and is intensifying planning and preparations for action, and we are continuing and intensifying diplomatic efforts to see if that is going to be necessary or not," he said.

The U.S. envoy held three rounds of fruitless talks with Milosevic earlier this week. Prior to Thursday's meeting in London of the six-nation Contact Group on the crisis in Kosovo where Milosevic's forces have conducted a brutal crackdown on ethnic Albanian rebels seeking independence.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook warned Friday that "NATO's planning is, if necessary, for successive, co-ordinated attacks which would make sure President Milosevic could not continue to deploy the heavy military that he has in Kosovo."

"I have said before that if force is the only language

that President Milosevic understands, Britain is ready to back force," Cook said.

His French counterpart Hubert Vedrine, who was also at the London meeting, was officially quoted as saying later that the group had ruled out "resorting to immediate massive strikes" in favour of "progressive and interspersed" action alongside resumed political efforts.

The Contact Group laid down six conditions with which Milosevic had to comply, including a halt to hostilities, the withdrawal of Serb forces, access for humanitarian organisations, the return of refugees and the start of real negotiations with the Kosovo Albanians.

Holbrooke confirmed that the six powers at the meeting — the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Russia — had "unanimously backed" a new round of talks in Belgrade.

Russia notably continued to resist the option of air strikes, advocated mainly by the United States and Britain, warnings of "dire consequences" if NATO pressed ahead with military action.

President Boris Yeltsin Friday redoubled efforts to avert military action. "We cannot allow a NATO strike to happen here," Interfax quoted him as saying during a Kremlin meeting with Defence Minister Igor

Sergeyev.

Britain and the United States Thursday said they were prepared to launch NATO strikes against Serbia despite stiff opposition from Russia, which has traditionally been supportive of the Serbs. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright stressed Russia did not have the power to veto such strikes.

Meanwhile in the embattled southern Serbian province, the Albanian-language daily Koha Ditore reported that the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) had declared a unilateral ceasefire, effective Friday.

The province's mainstream political leader Ibrahim Rugova for his part told local journalists that Serb military and police forces had not withdrawn but were continuing to shell villages in central and northern Kosovo. "Serb forces have not withdrawn from Kosovo," he was quoted as saying.

He charged that any Serb police movement in the province was simply "a repositioning of their forces in Kosovo."

A Western diplomat in Kosovo said Thursday that while some paramilitary police units had been withdrawn there remained others in sensitive areas that were preventing those people displaced by the fighting from returning home.



Portuguese writer José Saramago smiles in front of a huge poster of himself during a news conference. Saramago was awarded the 1998 Nobel prize for Literature. At left is Saramago's wife Pilar del Rio (Reuters photo)

'Nobel prize triumph for Portuguese'

FRANKFURT (R) — Portuguese writer Jose Saramago Thursday hailed his Nobel Prize for literature as a great victory for the Portuguese language.

"The Portuguese language had to wait 100 years for this," the jubilant 76-year-old author told a hastily convened press conference at the world's biggest book fair after he won the coveted prize.

Saramago was just about to board a plane back to his home on the Spanish island of Lanzarote when told news of the prize. "A couple of minutes later and I would have been aboard the plane," he said.

The author, faced with dozens of clamouring reporters at the Frankfurt fair, said his first reaction was: "That's great but I am still going to catch the plane. But my publisher said 'Forget it, we are going back'."

Savouring Portugal's first Nobel literature prize, he said:

"There have to be ways and means of protecting the language so that it does not become a museum, but is something that is alive ... The writer's role is to protect it and work with it."

He said that winning the Nobel prize would not save the Portuguese language but at least it would help protect it. "Portuguese will become more visible and more audible," he added.

Saramago won a purse of 7.6 million Swedish crowns (\$985,000) from the academy in Stockholm.

Asked what he would do with the prize, he joked with reporters and asked: "Have you any suggestions?"

He said he would certainly not be going out to buy three cars or four video recorders. "I shall not be going to the casino and gambling," he pledged.

"We are so used to the fact that writers should be poor ... You never ask a tennis player or a football player what he is

going to do with all the money he earns," he said.

His award sparked scenes of jubilation as his publisher and agent embraced, waved red roses and toasted each other in champagne.

Among the first to congratulate Saramago was his former German publisher Michael Naumann, designated as Germany's culture minister in the newly elected Social Democrat-led government.

He was overjoyed, telling reporters: "This is very important for Portugal because you have to understand that a land that has been so marginalised can become known in the whole world in the area of literature. This is great for a small country."

His publisher, Jose Oliveira of the Caminho publishing house, said: "This is wonderful for Portugal as a nation. We have never won a Nobel prize. This is all very sudden. I am very shocked."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Russia asks European Union for humanitarian, food aid

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian leaders asked European Commission President Jacques Santer for food and humanitarian aid during talks here Friday, a spokesman for the visiting EU chief said. The appeal "merits reflection," said the official, who stressed however that any aid would have to be preceded by a feasibility study. "On the one hand we would have to study whether the request is well-founded, and on the other we would have to ensure it was done correctly, without harming local distribution networks." Santer did not announce any concrete details of the desired aid and no new plan was announced following his talks with Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov. The talks aimed to lay the ground-work for a summit between Russia and the European Union set for Oct. 27 in Vienna. Santer told a press conference. "It's up to the Russians to work out a programme without outside interference," said Santer, adding however that the Union "is ready to provide technical assistance to revive commercial links between the European Union and Russia." The EU chief said he hoped Russia would develop a social market economy which would prove able to attract back foreign investors stung by a government debt default in August and the collapse of the Russian stock market. For his part Primakov said he was convinced investor confidence would return, promising that "the effectiveness of my government will show that you can trust Russia. 'Russia will remain faithful to the partnership and cooperation accord between Russia and the European Union,' the premier added. Both men underscored that "the stability and balance of Russia is the stability and balance of Europe."

Thousands of Colombian kids work for army, paramilitaries

NEW YORK (AFP) — Known as "little bees" and "little bells", thousands of children are working in Colombia for the army, guerrilla units and paramilitary forces, many in violation of international norms, Human Rights Watch said in a report. While most of the children are over 15 years of age, all sides are increasingly recruiting younger children which is strictly forbidden by international conventions, said the report. Paramilitary units are the worst offenders, recruiting thousands of children as young as eight to patrol alongside adults, the human rights group said, adding that in some units, half of the fighting force is made up of children. Among leftist guerrillas, up to 30 per cent of their force are children, who are made to gather information, manufacture and hide landmines, and in ambushes against law enforcement units and paramilitaries. If they run away, the report said, the children are branded deserters and can be executed as soon as they are captured. The Colombian army and police force have recruited more than 15,000 children, who are called "little bells" because they usually take up vanguard positions, warning of an impending attack and running the highest risk of death or injury. The guerrillas call their children "little bees" because they sting the enemy before they know they are under attack, said the report, issued here Thursday.

Rwanda to release 10,000 prisoners accused of genocide

KIGALI (AFP) — Rwanda Friday announced the imminent release of 10,000 prisoners accused of taking part in the 1994 genocide of ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Speaking on national radio, Justice Minister Faustin Nteziryayo said the release would affect prisoners lacking or having incomplete legal files. "Rwanda is a country which must respect human rights, so it was incomprehensible that people were detained for four years without files," said Nteziryayo. Thursday, all of Rwanda's public prosecutors, as well as envoys from the defence and interior ministries, met to discuss the decision. No dates have been set for the first releases because authorities want to organise awareness campaigns across the country to guarantee the safety of the freed prisoners. Several people accused of taking part in the genocide have been killed after being freed in Rwanda, notably in the southern region of Butare and the southwestern region of Cyangugu. Some 1,500 prisoners have been freed recently, mainly because of their age, poor health or incomplete paperwork. Rwandan prisons currently hold more than 132,000 people accused of taking part in the genocide, during which between 500,000 and 800,000 people were killed. Around 100 death sentences have been handed down, leading to 22 public executions in April.

Russian mafia suspect to face Swiss criminal trial

GENEVA (AFP) — Suspected Russian mafia boss Serguei Mikhailov will be tried in Geneva at the end of November on a series of criminal activity charges, a Swiss court ruled Friday. The court approved a request by Geneva's public prosecutor for the case be heard by a correctional court, which metes out less severe punishments than higher courts. Mikhailov, 40, has been detained for two years in Geneva on charges including money laundering, belonging to a criminal organisation, falsifying documents and breaking real estate laws. Some three million Swiss francs (\$2.3 million) have been blocked in bank accounts linked to him. However, the presumed godfather, known popularly as "Mikha", will not be tried for money laundering, with which he was also originally charged. This allows him to appear in the lower court. The trial is scheduled to begin Nov. 30 and he faces a maximum prison sentence of seven and a half years. Mikhailov came to Switzerland from Vienna in 1995 and in October 1996 was arrested while living with his wife and two children in the southern canton of Vaud. He is suspected of heading the mafia clan Solntsevskaya, named after the Moscow quarter where most of its members live and which is thought to specialise in racketeering. Mikhailov, who left Moscow in 1993 for Vienna, has denied any links with organised crime.

Serb government bans foreign-origin broadcasts

BELGRADE (AFP) — Citing "NATO's threats of armed attacks," the Serbian government Friday banned retransmission of foreign radio programmes by independent broadcasters. The ban, published as a decree in the official gazette, targets among others the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, the BBC and Deutsche Welle, although none was specified by name. Local radio stations in Serbia frequently retransmit programmes in the Serb language from those broadcasters. The decree bans "the reproduction or transmission, in part or in whole, of programmes or texts by foreign news broadcasters which damage the interests of our country, which spread fear, panic or defeatism, or which negatively affect citizens' willingness to preserve the integrity of Serbia and Yugoslavia." Offenders are liable to be "temporarily forbidden to work and have their means of work confiscated" and to be fined up to 10,000 dinars (\$1,000). Publication of the decree followed a warning to independent broadcasters from the information ministry Monday against retransmitting programmes "made by the propaganda services of Western powers which are conducting a hostile policy" towards Yugoslavia.

Bosnian mass grave believed biggest found so far

SARAJEVO (R) — A mass grave found in eastern Bosnia this week may be the biggest so far, containing the bodies of some 300 Muslims, government officials said Friday.

They said experts had so far found 160 bodies of victims of the 1992-95 Bosnian war. There were indications of many more lying in the grave by the village of Glumina, near Zvornik, which is close to the border with Serbia.

"We have every reason to believe that we are working on the biggest mass grave discovered so far," Amor Masovic, head of the state commission for missing persons, told Bosnian television.

He said the bodies were well preserved and identification would be made

easier by the possibility of taking fingerprints from some of the victims.

More than 200,000 people were killed in Bosnia's 43-month ethnic war between Muslims, Croats and Serbs. Zvornik, like other towns in eastern Bosnia, was "ethnically cleansed" by Serb forces which expelled or killed Muslims living there before the conflict.

In what is considered the war's worst atrocity, Serb forces in 1995 allegedly massacred thousands of Muslim men near the town of Srebrenica, some 30 km south-east of Zvornik.

Jasmin Odobasic, deputy head of the missing persons commission, said the victims in the newly discovered grave were believed to be

Muslim civilians killed in 1992.

The bodies were packed in plastic bags with the insignia of the JNA, the Yugoslav People's Army, Odobasic said. The bags were numbered and one with the number 297 had been found.

Experts would continue their work at the site Friday and Saturday, Odobasic told Reuters. He said the previous biggest mass grave, near the town of Kijuc in northwest Bosnia, had contained 188 bodies, also Muslims.

Newspaper Dnevni Avaz said some 400 mass graves had been located around Bosnia and that the region around Zvornik was one of the worst. The town is now part of Bosnia's Serb Republic.

Snake believed to have bitten boy on board plane

PERTH, Australia (AP) — Ansett Airlines grounded one of its planes to search for a snake after a 6-year-old boy was bitten by a deadly taipan thought to be on board, the airline said Friday.

Ansett spokesman Peter Young said the Australian airline was notified Sunday that the boy had been bitten and that his mother believed it had been on board the plane during a cross-country flight from Melbourne to Perth the previous day.

He said the A-320 Airbus was searched by seven experienced snake catchers when it landed in Adelaide on the return flight, and was searched again by sniffer dogs and fumigated on its return to Melbourne.

"We're absolutely satisfied that there is no snake on that aircraft," Young said Friday.

Khyll Hardy was taken to a hospital early Sunday after his mother Melissa noticed he was shaking. She said he had been vomiting during the 4 1/2-hour flight to Perth, but she had put it down to motion sickness.

When he was taken to the

Joondalup Health Centre, urine tests and a swab confirmed he had been bitten by a taipan.

Hardy said he believed Khyll was bitten just prior to takeoff when he bent down to pick up a lollipop he had dropped.

"He bent down to pick it up. He said he'd hurt his leg, but I just ignored it. I just thought he was being silly and told him to get back on the seat," she said.

"Within a few minutes he started throwing up." She said she noticed puncture marks in Khyll's left leg when putting him to bed later that night, but she suspected it was a spider bite.

The medical centre's emergency services director, Dr. Garry Wilkes, said Khyll was treated for dehydration, but that no anti-venom was needed.

He said Khyll's good recovery indicated the snake was only small.

Young said technical staff had removed panelling inside the plane to look for the snake, and that the air conditioning had been switched between hot and cold to alternate the temperature in a bid to drive the snake out.

Europe resigned to long Clinton probe, weaker U.S.

PARIS (R) — Europe Friday displayed grim resignation to a drawn-out impeachment investigation of President Bill Clinton it feared would paralyse Washington's leadership at a time of great global danger.

Several European newspapers, keeping to a minimum their coverage of Thursday's House of Representatives vote to open a formal impeachment inquiry, echoed Clinton's appeal for a "timely" inquiry and his acknowledgement that the matter was "not in my hands.... There is nothing I can do."

Clinton is struggling to conduct business as usual in the face of a threatened world economic downturn and a crisis over Kosovo, where NATO may be only days away from launching air strikes against Yugoslavia.

The Times of London said the president could short-circuit the impeachment process only by resigning or fully admitting perjury.

"In conclusion, a results might allow Mr. Clinton to

survive and serve out his term. This is hardly an attractive manner in which to approach the constitutional question of 'high crimes and misdemeanours'. It is, though, the path that appears to lie ahead."

In France, only the conservative Le Figaro put news of the vote on its front page, while several other dailies ignored the subject altogether.

"As in Watergate, the investigation launched yesterday has no limit on its length, which could tempt the Republicans to leave the White House simmering in the juices of impeachment," the newspaper said.

Clinton's attempts to remain an active leader "cannot disguise the reality: eight months of scandal have weakened, even disarmed, the man said to be the most powerful in the world," it said.

French popular opinion is strongly behind Clinton, who is seen by the public here as a victim of a sexual

scandal. British Prime Minister

Tony Blair has also made clear that London will stand by Clinton, stressing the importance of Anglo-American ties.

But a member of his cabinet, International Development Secretary Clare Short, broke with her boss and said she thought Clinton should step down.

"I think in our system any prime minister caught out in a similar way would go," Short said on BBC television.

"I think a politician that's done that much, told that many lies, isn't really fit to be a leader. But the American people appear to take another view," she said.

In Rome, the daily la Repubblica ran a front-page editorial on what it called "the latest American folly."

"Country of madmen, founded by madmen, made great by madmen, America has committed its latest folly and formally opened an impeachment inquiry into its own president, and all for — what else? — a mad story," the newspaper

"Or at least that's what we'd like to believe, we Europeans, lucid and rational enough to have produced — this century alone — Hitler, Stalin, the Great War... and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans," it continued.

La Repubblica said Clinton was caught in an "infernal machine", trapped into a mad, unstoppable march towards collective destruction.

Danish daily Berlingske Tidende wrote in an editorial that the impeachment proceeding "rumbles on in a sequence that smacks more and more of political persecution and a lack of responsibility by leading U.S. politicians. It is truly not a pretty sight."

In Spain, the Barcelona daily La Vanguardia wrote of its fear that conservative members of Congress would now use the vote "to impeach a president who two years ago won election by a margin of four million votes and who is still backed by 60 per cent of the people."

Officials suspect the accident was a result of the boat being overloaded.

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 Elia Nasrallah

Editorial and Advertising offices
 Jordan Press Foundation,
 University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman

Telephones: 5684311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585

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Valuable process

NOW THAT His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, has again called for involving academia in the national decision-making process, will this government finally take heed, where all others have failed to?

It is a verity that most ill-conceived policies in the developing world can be attributed to lack, or better still, neglect, of sophisticated and thorough study and assessment of national issues. This unfortunate fact, often compounded by "know-it-all" arrogance on the part of governments, is frequently a recipe for disaster.

A tried and true prescription in the developed world is the solicitation of universities and institutions of higher learning in providing valuable assistance to the decision-makers of their governments. There is significant merit in both empirical and theoretical research in gathering information on issues of contemporary concern, analysing and interpreting the data objectively and scientifically and not only presenting it to decision-makers but engaging them in thorough discussions of the findings. The first problem is to convince the decision-makers that their policies could be better directed with academic advice. The second is to guarantee that academics can pursue their work unhindered within an ethical framework that conforms to the country's laws.

The invitation to academia to play a more visible role in shaping the Kingdom's policies is certainly welcomed. If applied, the concept will help widen the base of the decision-making process and render it more enlightened and sound. This would also mean that the different ministries and governmental agencies would make full use rather than dismiss or fear academic contributions to national consensus.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Mahmoud Jbour said the recent national conference on unemployment did not discuss the political factors affecting the population/resources formula, and how to achieve at least a minimum balance between the two. He added that the confusion of the issue was not for internal reasons, but because of the political chaos created from the immigration of Palestinians, in the midst of a bad and worsening economic condition. Arabs did not support the Kingdom in integrating the Palestinians in the country, the writer claimed. At the same time, Jbour said, Israel's stubborn policies keep worsening the situation, and he urged all involved parties to solve the matter.

Al Dustour's editorial commented on HRH Crown Prince Hassan the Regent's meeting with the academic sector, saying it will ensure the continuity of dialogue and partnership between the government and all society's sectors. The academic sector enjoys a unique position in the civil community, and has responsibilities to modernise and enlighten society. The Regent called upon academics to be more effective in dealing with issues of national concern in order to create an objective dialogue based on accurate information, study and research, the editorial said. This is a basic condition for achieving economic and social development. Prince Hassan also called for using qualifications and capabilities as objective standards to evaluate general performance and achieve fairness. This is a frank call to equalise all society's parties, said the editorial.

Jordanian Perspective

The murky scenario ahead

Dr. Musa Kellani

THIS WEEK, the three most influential leaders of the Islamic movement in Jordan walked into the Iranian Ambassador's office to express their willingness to mediate between Teheran and the Taleban movement which has strong ties with Jordanian mainstream Islamists here. A few days later, Dr. Arabiyat, Dr. Farhan and Muslim Brotherhood leader Dunebat visited the Syrian charge d'affaire to express solidarity with Damascus in its confrontation with Ankara, thus echoing the popular pulse of Jordanians who held rallies voicing support for Syria. But we can only hope against hope that this Thursday's border skirmish between the Iranian army and fighters of the Afghan Taleban militia will not lead to a full-scale war between the two Muslim neighbours.

The thought of an armed conflict is much more alarming when seen against the many other bad signs and a foreboding that all conflicts in the region could be coming to a head-on clash at the same time: The Turkish-Syrian crisis is threatening to erupt into a war that would definitely drag in their neighbours. There is mounting Arab frustration over the deadlocked peace process. Palestinians are feeling singularly helpless against Israeli intransigence despite what is touted as a breakthrough as represented in the agreement for a U.S.-Israeli-Palestinian summit in Washington on Oct. 15.

The stand-off between Iraq and the United Nations over arms inspections, with Baghdad insisting on a definite schedule for an end to the crippling sanctions imposed on it, seems to be leading into military action against Iraq — there are no immediate indications of such action, but Washington will undoubtedly act if the crisis is prolonged.

Iran and the Taleban have been rattling their sabres at each other for several weeks, and the Iranian military build-up on the border with Afghanistan was largely seen as undermining Taleban morale and bringing to heel the dominant Afghan militia for having allowed the slaughter of Iranian diplomats and officials.

However, as we have witnessed in the past and particularly in this region, full-scale wars begin with border skirmishes, and it is highly possible that the Iranian army, eager to display new fighting skills learnt from the eight-year war with Iraq,

might take its enthusiasm too far and touch off a fully-fledged conflict.

There are many theories that explain why there could be an Iranian desire to go to war with the Taleban, but none makes much sense, given that the Iranian army could not hope to win a conflict in Afghanistan; there is little ground to believe that Iran might succeed in what the once mighty Soviet army failed to accomplish.

Regardless of the immediate context and outcome of an Iranian-Taleban war, we cannot but voice fear that any conflict pitting the two does not bode well for anyone in the region.

Indeed, Iran would only be walking into a trap if it gets bogged down in a war with the Taleban. Surely, the strategists in Tehran are not naive enough to interpret the American missile strikes in Afghanistan in August, and repeated affirmations that there could be more of the same, as an amber signal for Iranian action against the Taleban.

The issues here are so intertwined that it is difficult to see any sense emerging from the behaviour of the various parties involved.

And that brings up many questions on the possible scenarios. Some of them would appear indeed as far-fetched, but what we have seen happening around us in the past 50 years really is far fetched: How is Iran going to react to possible Turkish military action against Syria? In the event that an armed conflict breaks out on the Iran-Afghan front, what Iran do to help its long-time ally Syria against the Turks? How will, or can, Iraq respond to an appeal for help from Syria, its new-found friend, eager to prove it is indeed a reliable ally in times of need? And how is the Arab World at large going to respond to Turkish military action against Turkey? Will the Arab states declare war on Turkey in line with the ill-famed, defunct Joint Arab Defence Agreement? What will be the U.S. reaction to an Iranian-Taleban war? Would it sit back, rubbing its hands as one of its sworn enemies, Iran, fight it out with another sworn enemy, the Taleban? Or will Washington, by proxy, ask for Israeli help to hit either or both — Iran with a view to taking out some of the newly-acquired

Iranian weaponry including Shihab 3 missile sites, and the Taleban with a view to "eliminating" the terrorist training camps in Afghanistan and taking out Osama Ben Laden and supporters? Indeed, it will be the realisation of the sweetest of dreams for Israel to see all these disputes flaring up at the same time without being directly involved.

The perfect scenario for Israel would be Iran getting locked into a war with Afghanistan and unwittingly allowing Israeli jets to bomb both Hizbollah bases in Lebanon as well as Iranian nuclear installations, regardless of their purpose and function. Similarly, a Turkish-Syrian armed conflict would allow Israel to both step up pressure on Damascus through Lebanon and also "take out" what Israeli military brains consider as the threat posed by Syria's possession of long-range missile installations.

Obliterating Iranian nuclear facilities, destroying Hizbollah infrastructure, and Syrian long-range missiles would go down well with the Israeli public, which in turn will boost the political fortunes of Benjamin Netanyahu. It will allow Netanyahu to generally neutralise the so-called challenge posed to him by his hardline rivals who are threatening to bolt the coalition if he returns any more land to the Palestinians (not that he is exactly very anxious to return the land, but he seems to think that ceding the 10 per cent he has agreed to is inevitable, hoping it will be the only territory that Israel will ever relinquish to the Palestinians).

The scenarios get murkier as we look deeper into the possibilities. But there is no doubt that we, Arabs and Muslims, will be the net losers whatever direction the events take.

It is difficult for us in Jordan to believe that the Muslim and Arab worlds are blind to the dangers that loom ahead. What is difficult to accept is the Muslim and Arab inaction against what could turn out to be a devastating blow, not only to the Arab and Muslim potential, but also to the very concept of regional security and a collective stand against common challenges. Jordan, among all Arab states, has the best ties with Turkey, and Syria is an adjacent Arab brother, which makes our dilemma more acute. Moreover, the region has hardly recovered from the carnage already inflicted upon it.

Brian Brown

Out of Order

Lessons from nature

AN INTERESTING news item came to my attention the other day: a group of nature-lovers on a boat near Australia were reported "horrorified" to see several killer whales, or orcas, kill a baby humpback whale. I had to laugh when I read the article. Nature-lovers upset at seeing nature? They're called "killer" whales for a reason, and it's not because of their manners. I imagine a group of people whose contact with nature consists of having watched both episodes of "Free Willy," then going on this little trip and being sorely disappointed that some uncouth orcas messed everything up. "Don't look, honey, those animals are acting like animals!"

Despite this unsavoury encounter, people, for a number of reasons, are generally interested in animals. They're fun to watch, as attested to by the popularity of such programmes as National Geographic and Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom, and fun to eat, as

attested to by the popularity of McDonald's and Taco Bell. But I think the main reason people like animals so much is because their behaviour can tell us about who we are: our reactions, the way we developed, the way our society is structured, and other important things. They also sometimes unwittingly reflect our own behaviour, allowing us to analyse it and learn.

Unfortunately, it seems that humanity still has much to learn. I'm not one of those people suggesting that humans go back to living in caves or give up technology or anything like this. Much has been written about how animals don't have war, greed, poverty and all of these other social ills, which is true. The reason behind this is clear: animals don't possess the minds or opposable digits to invent any of these things. Despite all of the negative results from mankind's march towards progress, there have also been a few good ideas and

inventions.

The main problem so far in the history of humanity has been a lack of means or desire to utilise these high achievements towards the betterment of people as a whole. Many reasons for this, some as ancient as mankind's journey to the bipedal posture, could possibly be found in the general way and under which institutions humans interact with one another. If people are seriously interested in eliminating so-called "animal-like" behaviour (such as the predatory orca-kills-humpback-whale example noted above — it happens every day in every society!) from their environment, more thought should be given to what exactly makes us superior, then refining these traits while discarding what remains.

Exactly what these are may be more difficult than most people think. There are numerous animal-like traits and needs that, no matter how far the human race progresses, will

always remain: food, water and, let's face it, sex. It's time to martial our resources, get our act together and show those bastard animals who's really in charge.

RECOMMENDED READING: "Invisible Man," by Ralph Ellison. This book tells the story of a black man living in the U.S. in the late 1940s or early 1950s who is forced to move from the Deep South to New York. The nameless protagonist is successfully betrayed by all the institutions he knew as a youth and others that he becomes part of in a bid to assert his identity in a world gone mad. Published in 1952, nearly a decade before the civil rights movement in the U.S. became a national issue, "Invisible Man" paints a bleak picture of the lies and illusions behind the ideology and promises of society.

The writer is on the editorial staff at the Jordan Times.

Zionist myths and a simple case of theft

By Zaid O. Nabulsi

IN A recent "no-expenses-spared" advertising campaign to lure more Russian Jews to immigrate to Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated: "The reason is simple. It's what we are here for: the gathering of the exiles. Having renewed Jewish sovereignty in the land of the Jews, we want to bring Jews to Eretz Yisrael."

One of the lingering tragedies of this century was indeed perpetrated under the pretext of the Zionist myth of "the Promised Land": the belief that the land of Palestine was promised by God to become the eternal homeland for the Jewish people.

It is sometimes very tempting to get carried away, amidst the prevalent falsification of the origins and history of the Palestinian tragedy, and actually start believing some of the lies that are being told. For there has been over the last half century a deliberate and overwhelming campaign of obfuscation of the simple facts lying at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict — aided and abetted by a conscience-stricken, and too often indifferent, imperialism West.

The concerted global effort at misinformation and deception has succeeded in transforming one of the simplest and most blatant cases of theft and dispossession into one of the seemingly most complex territorial disputes in history. On the ground where it matters, the Palestinian plight has been obscured to insignificance. Today, the Palestinian cause is being drowned in a pitiful and irrelevant quagmire over Israeli withdrawals from percentages of non-viable and unsustainable tiny self-ruled cantons. Meanwhile, the economic and social condition of the majority of the Palestinian people is catastrophic, to say the least. In the resulting confusion, the essence of the Palestinian tragedy has been completely overlooked and forgotten.

In such a situation, there is nothing more difficult than re-defining the obvious and illuminating the truth. There is nothing more difficult than un-telling the lies and invalidating the myths. Indeed, it is an exacting task to ask the world to return to its sanity, to ask people to become human again. But at the same time, nothing is more condemnable than accepting this situation by refraining from speaking out.

When you hear Israelis and Zionists so fervently express their God-given religious right to "return to their land" after spending millennia in "exile" — with absolute obviousness to the fate of the Palestinian inhabitants of that land — you cannot help but wonder at the sort of hypnotic spell that completely paralyses the listener from pointing out the monstrous absurdity of this argument and the horrendous implications of its flawed logic.

When you hear such people casually repeat that they "spent three thousand years away from home," the obviously ludicrous presumption should be immediately detected: any human being's life-span hardly ever exceeds one century, and unlike the Palestinian refugees — who still carry the keys to their robbed and confiscated houses and farms — no living Jew can profess to remember what it was like when his ancient ancestors supposedly lived in

Palestine thousands of years ago. Unlike today's Palestinians — who have been living in Palestine without interruption for the last fourteen centuries — no living Jew can claim to long for returning to a land which neither him nor any of his living family or memorable ancestors have ever inhabited. Unlike the Palestinians — who were forcibly uprooted from their homes and livelihoods — no living Jew can claim to have endured any kind of suffering whatsoever by virtue of being banished from any form of habitation of the land of Palestine.

Yet such absurdity is being propagated the whole time by respectable and intelligent people the world over. The "Promised Land" argument is constantly reiterated with zealous conviction everyday by politicians, soldiers, rabbis, historians, settlers, journalists and all other Israelis and Zionists alike. What is striking is that the audience for such absolute folly are not flabbergasted by its immense insanity as they ought to be. For there is no more twisted logic than that which lays biblical claims that are thousands of years old to ownership of an inhabited land in order to take it over and drive its population into exile or sub-human existence. There cannot be any more chaotic and ridiculous consequences that can result from the application of such logic in the world today. Any form of logical deliberation over this concept is instantly murdered when your adversaries imagine that they hold a direct promise for its implementation from the Almighty Himself. Indeed, history has taught us, there is nothing more destructive to humanity than a baseless and oppressive idea whose proselytisers self-righteously proclaim to represent and enact the will of God.

This incongruous biblical argument of the "Promised Land" has been tirelessly repeated in so many instances and at each available opportunity that rational and ordinary people in the West seem to have grown immune to its utter incoherence and are no longer able to see through its very flimsy moral texture. It is baffling to witness how such a lapse of rudimentary logical aptitude can plague an entire civilisation and become universally digestible.

But this is not without a good explanation. The atrocious crimes committed by Nazi Germany against the Jewish people have had an immeasurable impact upon the Jewish cause, and especially upon their quest to establish an independent state. Continuously and manipulatively reminding the world of the ugliness of the Holocaust has meant that the price of establishing such a state would always become justifiable — no matter what side-effects it may entail. Whenever the Western world would come close to considering the toll of the inhumane policies of the Israeli bully it helped to create and arm, it suddenly becomes hushed by the memory of the Holocaust — a memory made vividly unforgettable by the unrelenting Jewish propaganda machine. Any attempt to challenge the madness is readily categorised under notoriously unforgiving accusations and labels of "anti-semitism." But two wrongs can never make a right. Marginalising the suffering of the Palestinian people by invoking the numerical proportionality with the Holocaust is a futile exercise in the quantification of pain. All infliction of suffering is equally unjustifiable, regard-

less of how many people you have to kill. The Jewish people will simply lose the essential moral grounds to their claim that they have been wronged by the world when they — the supposed victims — are seen to dispossess, persecute and dehumanise an entire people.

The historic facts are well documented. In 1947, the indigenous Palestinian Arab population owned — privately or publicly — 93 per cent of the country, with the Jewish community owning only 7 per cent. On 29 November 1947, the United Nations adopted Resolution 181, partitioning Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states. Already it was a bizarre application of the principle of national self-determination: a full 86 per cent of the land allotted to the proposed Jewish state was Palestinian-inhabited and owned land, with its Jewish citizens in a slight, but distinct, minority position. Contrary to some current defeatist views, the Arab rejection of this grossly unfair partition plan was, of course, perfectly understandable. The aftermath of that U.N. decision was predictable. The resulting war led to the displacement of nearly one million Palestinians and to the Israeli conquest of a further 25 per cent of territory on top of what had been reserved for the Jewish state. The massacres of civilians and the orchestrated depopulation and obliteration of entire villages during that period are now recognised by prominent Israeli historians. Moshe Dayan, the one-eyed military figure who led all of Israel's wars, stated in his address to the Technion, Haifa in 1969 (as quoted in the Israeli daily, Ha'aretz, 4 April 1969):

"Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you because geography books no longer exist. Not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either. Nahal arose in the place of Mahlul; Kibbutz Gvar in the place of Jibta; Kibbutz Sarid in the place of Huneifis; and Kefar Yehoshua in the place of Tal Al Shuman. There is not one single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab Population."

What Dayan failed to add, however, was that the survivors of these villages still live in squalid refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon until this very day.

In 1967, and contrary to the widespread Israeli lie, it was Israel who invaded and occupied the rest of Palestine, the Golan Heights and the Sinai desert under the pretext of an imminent Arab attack. A further wave of nearly half a million refugees fled their homes in fear of repetition of the carnage that accompanied the 1948 war. Today there are 4.7 million Palestinians in the world, out of which 3.4 million are registered with UNRWA as refugees.

So, the facts of this apparently perplexing conflict are in fact uniquely simple. For there has never been in history such a straightforward case of dispossession and displacement of a people from their land by a completely alien population. Although Jewish immigration to Palestine started at the beginning of this century, until 1948 the Jewish population of Palestine did not exceed 400,000. Between 1948 and 1969 alone, nearly 1.5 million Jews immigrated to Israel. Another 1.3 million immigrants followed, nearly

one million of which came to Israel only since 1990. These people came from all over the world. None of them have ever set foot in Palestine before and they have come to take a land that was not theirs. We should never forget this basic fact. This is the foundation of our grievances. Any other attempt to deviate from this historical truth is yet a further distraction from the origin of our cause.

In a message to what he called "the Jewish Communities of the Diaspora" on the Occasion of Israel's 50th anniversary, Benjamin Netanyahu stated:

"I am certain that a majority of the Jewish people will be living in Israel by the time we celebrate the state's 60th anniversary."

Of course, no mention was even made of how Israel plans to physically absorb such a number without expanding in all directions — let alone displacing the current Palestinian population in the West Bank. But this is not the only problem with Jewish immigration to Israel. The notion that Jews from different countries have a superior right to live in Palestine than that of the native Palestinians lies at the heart of the morally indefensible teachings of Zionism. The Israeli Law of Return of 1950 gives any Jew — defined as "a person who was born of a Jewish mother" — the automatic right to Israeli citizenship and the inalienable right to live in Israel. The unbridled racism in this Zionist scheme speaks for itself.

The consequences of this unending influx of immigrants to Israel are rapidly becoming visible. More and more Palestinians will have to lose more homes and lands, and more settlements will continue to be built in their place. With the percentage of territory claimed by the Palestinian Authority shrinking at each new procrastinated negotiations session, it will not be very long before there will remain nothing to negotiate about. Houses are demolished and land is confiscated every day. The conclusion of this explosive situation is too obvious: Israel would eventually need to take further blows off its neighbours to accommodate its expanding population.

In the midst of all this madness, we must never relent in clearing the thick mist. Our case is far too simple to become confined to a stalled dispute about fractions of Israeli redeployments. We have to continue to call things by their names. We have to fearlessly articulate to the world all the insane teachings of Zionism. We have to make it known that for every Russian or any other Jew immigrating to Israel, there is another Palestinian family being made homeless. Indeed, for there ever to be a peaceful and just co-existence, we need to regain our conviction in the proverbial justice of our cause and expose the fundamental illegitimacy of Israel's occupation and theft of our land, for that is what it really is: a primitive act of theft. We have to get back at the roots of the Palestinian tragedy. And we have to tell our story. All other veils of hope, whether they would come from the Arabs, or even the Palestinian leadership, seem to have been closed.

The writer is an attorney working with the United Nations Compensation Commission in Geneva. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

A case of incurable optimism

Peggy Fisk died two weeks ago after a prolonged fight with Parkinson's Disease

By Robert Fisk

YEARS BEFORE her death, my mother told me there must be no black ties at her funeral. "Everyone must wear bright clothes," she said. "There must be lots of flowers and happy hymns." And a few days ago, in the beautiful little church at Barmingham, just outside Maidstone, she had the funeral she asked for. There were mountains of flowers, not a black tie in sight — even the bearers wore casual suits — and the congregation sang "All things bright and beautiful." But my mother's death was not as she would have wished. And it was certainly not a death she deserved.

My father, Bill, was much older than Peggy, already 47 when he married her in 1946. He was borough treasurer of Maidstone and a son of the former first mate of the Cutty Sark, the sailing clipper that is now in permanent dry-dock at Greenwich. Peggy was 26, the daughter of well-to-do Kentish café-proprietors. Both had served their country. Bill was in the trenches of northern France in the World War I (Battle of Arras, 1918) and, as head of the local Home Guard in 1940, was asked by MI6 to lead a Maidstone resistance organisation to harass the Nazis after the expected German invasion; I still possess my father's ambitious plans for blowing up Maidstone East railway station and the adjoining high level bridge over the river Medway. My mother joined the RAF during the Battle of Britain, mending Spitfire radio sets at RAF Western Zoyland; her sister trained air gunners in radio navigation.

Peggy became a flame of optimism over my young life. "Everything will always work out alright in the end," she used to say to me. And when I once asked what was the point of struggling with my homework when we were all going to die one day, she replied: "By the time you grow up, they may have found a cure for that." In a way, my mother did believe in immortality. I took her incurable optimism with me, thousands of miles from Kent to Afghanistan, through the terrible battles of the Iran-Iraq war and to the conflict in Lebanon.

But there was another side to Peggy. As father

fretted in retirement, she became a magistrate. I recall how one day, gently arguing with my father, Peggy said, quite sharply: "The accused often tell the truth — and I don't always trust policemen." As a small boy, the first book she urged me to read on my own was the Diary of Anne Frank — because she wanted me to under-

'Why do we not rage against those who accept that our betters are right preferring missiles to medicine?'

stand the nature of goodness. During the Israeli siege of Beirut in 1982, she discovered a rare telephone line into the Lebanese capital from Maidstone and used it to tell me how she deplored the cruelty visited upon the Palestinians. She asked me repeatedly why governments spend so much money on guns.

She took up painting, water-colours and oils, still life and portraits. My father was a loyal man. He could be proud and generous but also censorious and authoritarian and he sometimes bullied Peggy, although his closest friends would not have known this. As she looked after him in his last years — he was to die in 1992, aged 93 — she talked quietly of the life of independence she would lead afterwards. She wanted to travel, to visit Lebanon and go to Ireland. She saw a lifetime of painting in front of her.

But just before my father died, she was told she had Parkinson's Disease and steadily lost the

physical ability to live a dignified life — as surely as she maintained the will to survive. Within four years, she could scarcely speak or walk. So she communicated by pointing with a stick to letters on a piece of cardboard. Then she could no longer point. She insisted on moving around the garden of her home in a wheelchair. Then Peggy became too ill to move. Her last attempt to paint ended when she threw her brush onto the floor in frustration. Almost to the end, she believed they would find a cure for Parkinson's — the same "they" who might also one day find a cure for mortality.

In her last days, Peggy lost the power to swallow or eat and caught pneumonia. When I arrived home, she was desperately trying to cough, apparently drowning in her own lungs, weeping with pain. And as I watched her dying, I remembered the cost of Bill Clinton's latest adventure in the Middle East; in all, the U.S. government spent £70 million in five minutes firing Cruise missiles into Afghanistan and Sudan. How much had it spent on investigating Parkinson's disease? How much, for that matter, had the British government spent?

The day after she died — there was no glimmer of recognition or emotion, Peggy just stopped breathing — I called the Parkinson's Disease Society in London. Each year, they put up between a £1 million and £1.5 million on research. So did the British government. But last year, an official for the society told me, the Medical Research Council stopped funding neurological research: "no reason given." I called New York to talk to one of the top Parkinson's groups in the United States. Around £30 million was spent by the U.S. government on neurological research (not all on Parkinson's), another £7 million by private organisations, around £2.5 million by the U.S. Defence Department (for veterans) and pharmaceutical companies around £27 million. So we — the West — were spending less on Parkinson's research in a year than we spent in five minutes on weapons.

It was the kind of human folly Peggy would have understood. And at her flowered funeral, I decided to point this out. I suggested to her friends who came to Barmingham church that we spent far too much time accepting cruel deaths, uncomplaining when money which might have



Peggy Fisk with her husband: In her own way she believed in immortality

cured cancer or Alzheimer's or Parkinson's was spent on weapons or military adventures. "Why do we not rage against those who accept the shameful idea that sickness must be 'incurable,' that our betters know what they are doing when they prefer missiles to medicine?" I asked. "If resources had been better spent," I said, "Peggy would not have been in that coffin in front of the altar."

All this had an odd effect. You could have heard a flower petal drop when I was speaking. But the Rector, a kindly, intelligent man, though evidently not from Church Militant, responded with a prayer, saying he would "commit this anger to God" — which, of course, entirely missed the point. Unless there is a Heavenly Post Office which redirects packages of anger to our presidents and prime ministers, there wasn't much point in bothering the Almighty. It was Peggy's friends I was addressing. Some of them

had told me of their own relatives who were dying of supposedly incurable diseases; yet I felt afterwards that I had failed to make them understand as surely as I had the Rector.

They talked about Peggy being "at rest" now that she was no longer suffering. Letters arrived that spoke of Peggy's "release" — as if my mother wanted to die. I heard from one lady about "God's will" — which would suggest, if taken to its logical conclusion, that God was a sadist. If the message of Peggy's life was optimism and joy for others, the manner of her death — courtesy of our society's inverted values — was totally unnecessary. My father, an old-fashioned man, would have condemned my remarks in the church. My mother might have objected to their vehemence. But she would have wanted me to tell the truth.

— The Independent

Regional

Sudan's pyramids are a rarely visited treat

By Matthew Green
Reuters

LIKE A row of broken teeth, more than 50 black, granite tombs rise out of the windswept desert at a lonely site north-east of Khartoum. Visitors to Sudan's best-preserved pyramids, 200 km from the capital, can soak up the ambience in near solitude, in contrast to the bustle of Egypt's Giza pyramids. "I think there is a kind of soul here which is not in

Egypt," said French embassy employee Gregoire de Rivals-Mazeres.

"Maybe it's because it is less touristy and more silent." An incessant wind whips between the ghostly ruins, erasing the footprints of visitors almost as soon as they are made.

No coachloads of tourists or touts hawking camel rides disturb the calm. Business is slow for the four local boys selling home-made carvings and the solitary guide called

Mohammad, who speaks a few words of English.

Khartoum travel agents say that if Sudan's tourist industry ever picked up, the pyramids would be a magnet for visitors.

"It's one of the few places for tourists in Sudan to go to," said Acropole Hotel manager Athanasios Pagoulatos, as he leafed through a brochure showing the ruined temples at Naqa and Musawwarat. 100 km south-west of the pyramids, where statues of ele-

phants and lions are scattered in the sand.

Further north along the Nile banks are the remains of other pyramids that are now little more than piles of rubble.

Pagoulatos said there were no organised tours, so visitors must pay around \$160 to hire a four-wheel drive vehicle to get them there and back.

Among the world's poorest countries, Sudan could use the hard currency tourists would bring, but some fear any influx of foreigners would rob

the pyramids of their magic.

"Maybe in a few years there will be many people here," said Rivals-Mazeres. "I hope so for Sudan, but not for the site." Previous visitors have not always been a blessing.

Abdelhady Abdelhady, senior inspector of the National Board for Antiquities and Museums, said Italian explorer Ferlini had damaged many pyramids in a quest for treasure in the 1820s.

Ferlini smashed the tops off 40 pyramids in his clumsy

hunt but found only one cache of gold.

"I'm very sad he did that. It would have been better if he had excavated the pyramids properly," said Abdelhady, adding that they still hid many secrets. "We lost a lot of documentation of the pyramids because his aim was not to study."

Abdelhady said Sudan's ancient civilisation of Meroe built the pyramids to house their dead kings and queens. "It is a very important site... which we can say is a genuine Sudanese civilisation," he said, explaining that the Meroite kingdom in Sudan lasted from the fourth century BC to the fourth century AD.

A few kilometres from the pyramids, on the verdant banks of the Nile, lie the ruins of the Meroites' royal city, where the remains of a temple and baths can be seen among the meadows.

Abdelhady said the Meroites worshipped the same gods as their ancient Egyptian neighbours, and a few of their own such as Apedemak, who can be seen at the ruined temple at Naqa.

"They inscribed him in the walls. The upper part is in the form of a human, the head is a lion, the rest of the body is a large snake," he said.

Wandering through the royal city, the guide suddenly stopped, digging in the dust with his hands to reveal the corner of a giant obelisk inscribed with alien-looking letters.

"Meroite writing has never been understood," he said. The unexcavated obelisk is left buried for protection.

With even fewer archaeologists visiting the area than tourists, much of the pyramids' history remains an enigma.

Aden's last churches hold on for better days ahead

By Haro Chakmakjian
Agence France Presse

ROMAN CATHOLICS once numbered as many as 35,000 in Aden. Father Matthew now cuts a lonely figure and counts himself lucky if more than half a dozen turn up for mass in St. Francis church.

This impoverished and rundown port city in southern Yemen used to have 22 churches. But that was in another era, before the end of British rule in 1967.

St. Francis and Christchurch of the Anglicans, both more than 100 years old, have survived the communist takeover in Aden, the 1990 unification of this Muslim country and a north-south civil war in 1994.

But only just and only after a struggle.

The other churches have been confiscated, their cemeteries desecrated, including one turned into a football pitch, and last July, three sisters of the late Mother Theresa's order were gunned down in Hodeidah on the Red Sea.

St. Francis has its front door and windows walled in as a precaution. Father Matthew blames Islamic radicals from the north and outside Yemen for the taunts of "donkey priest, get out" which he has to face at times, as well as for the two instances in which he has had a gun pointed at his head.

Aden itself has long had a tradition of religious moderation and is the only area of Yemen to tolerate churches at all.

With plans afoot for an economic revival in Aden through the development of its port, the lonely 72-year-old priest is doggedly holding his ground, rather than leave Aden, until the return of better days.

"If you give it up, then the church here will be

lost forever. We won't be allowed to come back. It may be discouraging to see empty pews, but that's why we must hold on," Father Matthew Uzhunnalil explained.

"We hope that with the new port, the number of Christians coming to work and settle here will increase," said the Indian priest at his vast but empty residence, as overhead fans battled Aden's humidity.

Father Matthew has had to face taunts of 'donkey priest, get out' and twice had a gun pointed at his head

Indian traders and labourers helped turn Aden, a fishing village of a mere 600 people when the British invaded in 1839, into a bustling port city and colony. Many of them were Roman Catholics.

Christchurch, which like St. Francis stands behind steel gates in the hills of Aden, had a turnout of several dozens in the congregation last Friday for a farewell sermon by Reverend Tom Hamblin.

He recalled how his church was destroyed, with only the shell left behind, by looters in the

aftermath of the civil war, during which Westerners were evacuated across the Red Sea to Djibouti.

"We had to wade knee-deep through rubbish just to get inside the church" and human excrement was piled up around the altar, said the 62-year-old Englishman. "My wife, Edna, and I cried for a week."

But backed by a fatwa, or Muslim decree, from Yemen's religious leader assuring Christians the right of worship, Christchurch has been restored and a clinic built alongside to dispense free medical care to the neighbourhood.

"We have good relations with our neighbours. People wave when my wife takes the dog out for a walk," said Reverend Tom.

But for more than a quarter of a century, Christchurch was closed on the orders of the communist rulers of former South Yemen. It was used as a naval warehouse and its stain-glass windows smashed.

The military chaplain had to be evacuated with the British troops when Aden won its independence, unlike at St. Francis where a priest stayed on throughout the city's upheavals to man the church.

Hamblin, who himself passed through Aden in 1955 as an army medic, also recalled that Aden once had three synagogues and some Hindu temples, one of which is still used today by three Indian families.

A Jewish cemetery has suffered the same fate as its Christian counterparts and the only synagogue left standing in Aden is now a shelter for the destitute.

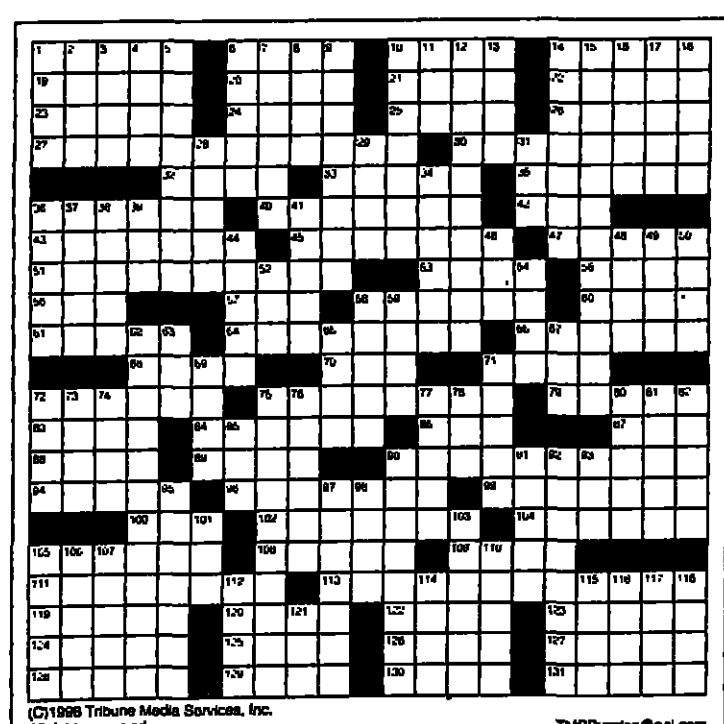
The Saturday Crossword

SEEING DOUBLE

By Alan P. Olschwang, Huntington Beach, California

- ACROSS
1. Elite social category
 2. Former Russian ruler
 3. Sea ZIA
 4. Spiral pin
 5. More prudent
 6. Zenith
 7. North Carolina college
 8. With 10A, silent-screen star
 9. Domesticated guinea pig
 10. Dignity
 11. Naval port
 12. Surprised reaction
 13. Extended a series?
 14. Acquiring
 15. Throw in the towel
 16. Tutor
 17. Attractive object?
 18. Built up
 19. Colonist
 20. Inhabitant of: auli
 21. Israeli nationalist
 22. Fencer
 23. Brilliance
 24. Law practice?
 25. Sacrifice play
 26. Ring around the moon
 27. White-tailed European eagle
 28. List-ending abbr.
 29. Play producer
 30. Seed coat
 31. Whimsy Houston's singing mom
 32. Dumbfound
 33. Extinguished naturally
 34. Bard
 35. Stint
 36. Keenly eager
 37. Principal ore of lead
 38. Argentina
 39. Profundity
 40. Ancient Greek coin
 41. Wale on
 42. One of the Dillmaggi brothers
 43. Stretch of time
 44. Saved by the —
 45. Zero of
 46. Ultimate test?
 47. Reduce drastically
 48. Of the forehead
 49. Parthian porch
 50. Red or yellow, e.g.
 51. Actress Fabray

- DOWN
1. Antenna
 2. One of the wise men
 3. Extensive
 4. Foster film "Little Man"
 5. Olympic discus legend
 6. Trilling snub?
 7. Shopping centers
 8. Sugar source
 9. Fourth title
 10. Pledge's lure
 11. Where lovers wait
 12. Gay
 13. Nod (mark my words)
 14. Spanish cubist painter
 15. Silent assent
 16. Impudent
 17. Lose one's self-control
 18. Splitter group
 19. Recipient
 20. Hole-making tool
 21. Rhythmic cadence
 22. Munich's river
 23. Parrot's pret.
 24. Serene
 25. Ankle bones
 26. Star Walter and Randolph
 27. Vindictive
 28. Remission
 29. Cincinnati team
 30. Pie mode
 31. Bad place for couples to be?
 32. Opposed
 33. Grooved like music
 34. Get five nicks for a quarter?
 35. Hold the throne
 36. Jockey Angelo
 37. The Man Who —
 38. Thrive
 39. New Jersey five
 40. Claret's pret.
 41. Claret's pret.
 42. Silhouette
 43. Silhouette
 44. Silhouette
 45. Silhouette
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48. Zhigago's beloved
49. Landlord
50. Lacquerware
51. Not unusual?
52. Math subj.
53. States of agitation
54. Brazilian monkey
55. Survive an essay round in the best?
56. Thriller's partner
57. Eye colorfully
58. Silent assent
59. Relaxation
60. Some pastimes
61. Model Stewart
62. Performs alone
63. Bomb blast, in kind
64. Rodeos
65. Tipper's last name
66. Scintillate
67. Increase
68. Employ
69. Family chart
70. Allotment's queen
71. Vestige

REUTERS REUTERS
The Business of Information

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

JEDCO approves setting up permanent commercial office at Jordanian embassy in Algeria

THE BOARD of directors of the Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centres Corporation (JEDCO) has decided to set up a permanent commercial centre at the Jordanian embassy in Algeria. "The decision to set up this centre is in line with government directives that aim at activating and developing cooperation ties with Arab states," JEDCO Chairman Mohammad Saleh Horani said.

The chairman, who is also the minister of industry and trade, added that the establishment of the centre complements the efforts of the Jordanian government which recently signed a trade agreement with Algeria in order to consolidate the commercial exchange between the two countries.

The centre will promote national exports of goods and services and will look for opportunities to widen exports in addition to providing the businessmen and exporters with the necessary information about the Algerian market," Horani indicated. Other functions that the centre will perform include relaying information about Algerian laws and regulations related to trade and the participation in

international and specialised fairs as well as organising exhibitions that would sell directly to consumers.

Horani said the step comes in harmony with the demands of the private sector to consolidate outside markets for our exports of goods and services and also in harmony with the government efforts to activate the Jordanian embassies abroad in playing a prominent and effective role in serving various elements of the national economy. He pointed out that the decision to set up the centre was based on field studies of the Algerian market showing wide opportunities for Jordanian and in order to benefit from the wide-ranging scopes made available through the economic accords signed between the two countries.

Latest figures show exports to Algeria amounting to JD21.6 million and imports from the North African country totalling JD1.1 million.

JEDCO last month opened a permanent commercial centre at the Jordanian embassy in Belgium to promote Jordanian exports and serve businessmen and industrialists (Al Ra'i).

Khreisha to present to Cabinet proposals to resolve indebtedness of farmers

IT HAS been learnt that Agriculture Minister Mijthem Khreisha will present to the Council of Ministers a report on implementing the government's directives for resolving the "agricultural indebtedness." The report recommends partial exemption of interest on small farmers and the mechanism of debt rescheduling to resume the success of the process and to safeguard the rights of the

Agricultural Credit Corporation while maintaining the smooth work of both the farmers and the corporation and the cooperation between them.

The rescheduling is expected to cover JD20 million of which 50 per cent are the indebtedness of Ghor (Jordan Valley) farmers (Al Dustour).

Bank of England cuts rates

LONDON (AFP) — The Bank of England Thursday cut interest rates for the first time in almost two and a half years, reducing its base rate by 0.25 percentage points to 7.25 per cent in the face of a world economic slowdown.

The current global economic crisis and a fall in domestic business confidence were the not cause of the cut, the bank said in a statement.

"The international economic and financial environment has deteriorated since the (monetary policy) committee met in September," the statement said.

"In the domestic economy, surveys and reports from the bank's regional agents have indicated a decline in business and consumer confidence. The outlook for demand and output has therefore weakened," it added. The rate cut followed government warnings that the British economy would slow next year because of reduced growth around the world.

The world's political and economic leaders have warned that the biggest threat to the world economy is now recession, not inflation.

The central bank concluded that "the risks of inflation falling below the target of 2.5 per cent have increased and that a reduction in interest rates of 0.25 per cent is now appropriate."

Members of the bank's monetary policy committee had come under relentless pressure from politicians and industry to cut rates.

Six increases in the cost of borrowing since May 1997, when the bank was given freedom to set interest rates, have seen the pound soar, undermining the balance sheets of exporting companies.

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET														
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDANIAN														
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179														
ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (03/10/1998 - 07/10/1998)														
WEEKLY REPORT														
DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS		COMPANY NAME	P/R	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACTS	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE MARKET PRICE	NO. OF TRADING DAYS
HIGH	LOW													
275,000	212,000	ARAB BANK	16.5	0.99	252	4130	1272465	216.50	216.50	201.00	201.25	-15.25	207.580	0.70
1,600	1,500	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	12.4	4.58	23	7428	12773	1.54	1.55	1.52	1.53	-0.03	1.543	0.19
1,000	1,000	BANK OF JORDAN	-	0.00	24	80014	83154	1.02	1.07	1.02	1.04	-0.04	1.039	0.381
970	900	MID-EAST INV. BK.	59.1	0.00	5	6000	5690	90	90	90	90	-	915	0.60
1,500	1,500	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	11.1	6.56	8	297817	470549	1.58	1.58	1.58	1.58	-	1.580	1.241
3,000	2,700	THE HOUSING BK.	17.8	3.54	118	71665	204107	2.80	2.95	2.81	2.81	-0.09	2.867	0.72
1,000	1,770	JOR. RUSTE BANK	1.1	0.00	15	2113	3716	1.80	1.77	1.75	1.75	-0.05	1.759	0.11
500	500	JOR. GULF BANK	-	0.00	21	45550	24933	57	56	53	53	-0.04	547	0.25
2,000	2,000	ARAB JOR. INV. BK.	40.6	2.50	1	750	1500	2.02	2.00	2.00	2.00	-0.02	2.000	0.04
1,170	1,600	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	17.4	0.00	45	13793	23378	1.72	1.71	1.67	1.70	-0.02	1.695	0.63
1,000	1,000	UNION BK. DEV. INV.	143.5	0.00	1	1000	900	95	90	90	90	-0.05	900	0.05
1,400	1,420	JOR. INV. FID. BANK	21.8	3.52	10	4819	9680	1.42	1.42	1.42	1.42	-	1.420	0.34
770	770	RETAIL-VAL. (REITVA)	3.5	0.00	6	1700	1237	76	73	72	72	-0.04	728	0.05
770	770	PHILADEL. INV. BK.	998.9	0.00	30	44000	29450	67	66	64	64	-0.02	658	0.448
BANKS SECTOR														
2144539														
INDEX NUMBER 247.05														
CHANGE 10 - 5.97%														
1,350	1,350	JERUSALEM INSUR.	9.8	5.52	3	1098	1585	1.35	1.45	1.40	1.45	-0.10	1.444	0.01
2,750	2,750	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	7.3	9.62	23	11350	29582	2.65	2.65	2.58	2.60	-0.05	2.606	0.16
1,100	1,100	ROYAL LAND INSUR.	8.2	0.00	4	1150	1245	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	-	1.100	0.57
1,500	1,500	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	9.3	0.00	3	3350	6499	1.94	1.94	1.94	1.94	-	1.940	0.127
INSURANCE SECTOR														
33														
16948														
INDEX NUMBER 124.59														
CHANGE 10 - 0.33%														
1,510	1,430	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.3	5.73	85	79238	137766	1.48	1.48	1.41	1.44	-0.05	1.436	0.396
9,000	9,000	JOR. HOTEL TOURISM	26.2	0.00	1	400	3632	9.08	9.08	9.08	9.08	-	9.080	0.08
1,970	1,600	INDI. ELECTRICITY	10.9	5.65	42	13150	22573	1.60	1.77	1.55	1.77	-0.17	1.717	0.38
1,710	1,710	SHIPPING LINES	40.4	4.68	1	100	401	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.01	-	4.010	0.58
1,000	1,000	ROYAL PORTFOLIO	27.9	0.00	9	2850	3013	72	73	70	70	-0.02	706	0.57
740	490	REAL ESTATE INV.	14.7	0.00	1	500	375	72	75	75	75	-0.03	750	0.11
300	270	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	-	0.00	8	9350	2565	28	27	27	27	-0.01	274	0.27
5,560	5,470	ALBA-1	8.5	1.34	6	311	1699	5.50	5.51	5.45	5.45	-0.05	5.463	0.10
1,100	1,000	MID. EAST HOTELS	289.0	0.00	2	1750	1908	1.09	1.09	1.09	1.09	-	1.090	0.32
1,940	1,900	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	9.4	2.12	23	26573	50415	1.90	1.90	1.88	1.89	-0.01	1.897	0.31
900	880	BANKA EDUCATION	3.3	0.00	9	5400	4821	90	90	88	88	-0.02	893	0.91
1,190	1,120	UNIFIED CO.	5.0	9.02	20	10350	11448	1.14	1.13	1.12	1.12	-0.02	1.125	0.20
520	510	UNION LAND DEV.	-	0.00	1	3000	1500	50	50	50	50	-0.02	500	0.60
1,110	1,090	UNITED FOR FINANC. INV.	1.4	5.79	2	11000	12210	1.10	1.11	1.11	1.11	-0.01	1.110	0.550
SERVICES SECTOR														
217														
145836														
INDEX NUMBER 105.51														
CHANGE 10 - 0.91%														
1,960	1,870	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	31.0	5.95	44	12615	23609	1.88	1.90	1.85	1.85	-0.03	1.872	0.021
1,600	1,440	JOR. PROSPERITY MINES	16.8	0.00	3	1100	3540	1.45	1.40	1.40	1.40	-0.05	1.400	0.03
4,150	3,850	ARAB POTASH CO.	18.5	5.23	15	51130	22900	3.86	3.80	3.75	3.75	-0.11	3.770	0.71
10,700	10,450	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.2	8.49	40	5003	62217	10.65	10.73	10.47	10.47	-0.18	10.540	0.92
4,900	4,850	JORDAN TANNIN	7.8	8.24	4	1092	5294	4.85	4.85	4.85	4.85	-	4.848	1.09
1,150	1,110	INDUSTRIAL COMM. AGR.	67.4	0.00	14	3589	4090	1.15	1.15	1.13	1.14	-0.01	1.140	0.72
2,740	2,420	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	7.1	2.93	85	23972	62495	2.45	2.63	2.56	2.56	-0.09	2.607	1.33
1,140	1,040	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	4.7	9.35	1	600	442	1.04	1.07	1.07	1.07	-0.01	1.070	0.12
1,100	1,080	JOR. PIPES MANFCT.	9.1	9.09	2	1000	1090	1.08	1.10	1.08	1.10	-0.02	1.090	0.31
6,950	6,850	ARAB CHEM. INDUSTR.	7.5	7.41	2	200	1350	6.85	6.75	6.75	6.75	-0.10	6.750	0.30
5,650	5,380	DAR ALADAMA DR. INV.	4.3	6.70	9	1300	6846	5.38	5.36	5.22	5.22	-0.14	5.266	0.82
1,000	1,720	ARAB ALUM. IND.	13.2	13.97	14	5530	9941	1.40	1.40	1.38	1.39	-0.01	1.398	0.92
420	380	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	13.2	0.00	32	25324	9852	39	39	38	38	-	389	0.767
900	770	ARAB PAPER COM. TRD.	23.2	0.00	17	42400	72474	77	77	76	76	-0.01	764	1.211
450	370	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	-	0.00	14	6720	2895	41	46	41	41	-0.05	421	1.68
370	300	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	-	0.00	60	14250	15590	30	32	28	28	-0.01	287	1.354
370	340	JOR. RESEARCH INDUS.	-	0.00	1	700	35	35	35	35	35	-	350	0.07
970	860	UNIV. CHEM. INDUS.	10.3	7.92	18	3950	3859	94	1.01	93	1.01	-0.07	977	0.263
450	390	WAT. CABLE WIRE-MFAC	32.3	0.00	3	1100	759	71	69	69	69	-0.02	690	0.15
450	500	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM	7.2	0.00	20	14400	5422	39	39	38	38	-0.01	381	0.320
1,200	1,210	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	13.6	4.88	11	2400	4454	1.25	1.24	1.22	1.23	-0.02	1.234	0.72
750	640	UNIV. MOON INDUS.	9.9	9.68	55	28540	17618	65	65	61	62	-0.03	617	0.476
450	480	JOR. IRDS. RESOURCES	-	0.00	16	18742	9356	51	50	49	50	-0.01	499	0.234
1,240	1,230	NATL. CHLORINE	8.6	8.13	5	11978	14732	1.23	1.23	1.23	1.23	-	1.230	1.66
680	620	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	8.7	16.23	28	39900	24705	63	64	60	62	-0.01	619	0.99
1,300	1,200	EL. EGY. READY REAR	45.0	0.00	27	4000	59839	1.28	1.31	1.26	1.28	-	1.264	0.31
1,080	970	INTL. TOBACCO	7.2	5.46	41	129350	133039	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.03	-0.01	1.039	1.078
1,020	910	UNION CH. & WED.	9.9	0.00	1	250	225	91	90	90	90	-0.01	900	0.05
980	850	JORDAN STEEL	9.6	8.14	21	78880	67312	85	86	85	86	-0.01	853	0.526
730	670	NAT. ALUMINIUM	32.7	0.00	49	27081	17923	67	66	66	66	-0.02	662	0.301
580	540	MID-EAST COMPLEX	9.6	0.00	32	26100	13712	54	53	52	53	-0.01	528	1.19
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR														
682														
676152														
INDEX NUMBER 75.89														
CHANGE 10 - 2.20%														
GRAND TOTAL														
1493														
1445017														
3252377														
INDEX NUMBER 162.08														
CHANGE 10 - 4.76%														
NO. OF DAYS TRADED : 5														
DAILY AVERAGE OF TRADING VOLUME : JD 650,475														
DAILY AVERAGE OF TRADED SHARES : 289,003														
DAILY AVERAGE OF CONTRACTS : 299														

NBA negotiations 'cordial' but unproductive

NEW YORK (AFP) — The resumption of negotiations Thursday between the National Basketball Association and its players union did nothing to raise hopes that the regular season will begin as scheduled November 3.

Although the five-hour meeting — the first between the sides since August 6 — was described as "cordial" by NBA deputy commissioner Russ Granik, the prevailing air of pessimism heading into the proceedings was realized as both sides refused to give ground.

Another meeting was scheduled set for Tuesday morning. "We certainly did not make any progress in terms of reaching any agreements," Granik said. "Perhaps we made progress in terms of the players understanding our position."

A formal decision about the cancellation of regular-season games is expected to be made next week, but it looked likely that the league will lose regular-season games to a labor stoppage for the first time in its 52-year history.

"We would like very much to have a

season that we would call a season," said league Commissioner David Stern. "We know we'll have to suffer the consequences of our decisions. That's where we are. We'll have to beg for indulgence of the fans and hope to make a long term success out of that crisis."

The owner-imposed lockout, in effect since July 1, has already led to the cancellation of the entire preseason schedule.

Today, Players Association representatives went over a proposal they soundly criticized from the league less than two weeks ago. It is expected they will present a counterproposal Tuesday.

The major stumbling block is the league's attempt to put a ceiling on salaries and install a hard cap by phasing out the Larry Bird exception. The union says the Bird exception, the clause in the previous agreement that allows teams to re-sign free agents already playing for them without regard to the salary cap, is not negotiable.

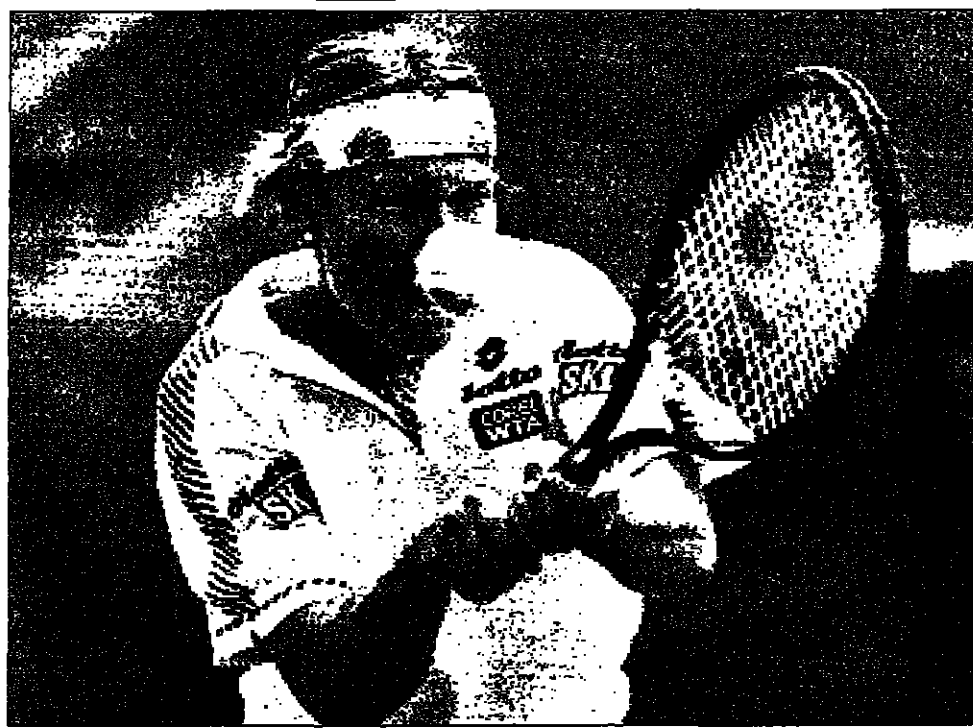
Along with phasing out the Bird exception, the latest owners' proposal also deals with the elimination of the three-year rookie scale, which allows third-year players unrestricted free agency after their third season with the team.

Meanwhile, several NBA players have attended practice sites and work-out facilities this week to discuss the lockout with fans and media.

Both sides are awaiting the ruling of arbitrator John Feerick on a grievance filed by the Players Association hours before the owners imposed the lockout.

"Regardless of which way John Feerick rules, this is only going to get settled with the players at the bargaining table," Stern said.

The union claims NBA players have guaranteed contracts that should allow them to be paid during the lockout. The NBA contends its actions are entirely legal during a work stoppage.



Anke Huber

Mixed fortunes for Williams sisters; Huber out

FILDERSTADT (AFP) — There were mixed fortunes for the big-hitting Williams sisters at the WTA tournament here Thursday.

Serena Williams, 17, dented Wimbledon champion Jana Novotna's chances of becoming world number-one by scoring a second-round victory when the Czech player was forced to retire with a back injury in the third set. The American was leading 2-6, 6-3, 2-0.

But 18-year-old fifth-seed Venus Williams went down to

Belgium's Dominique van Roost 6-1, 6-2.

Novotna, who looked to be cruising to a comfortable victory when she led by one set and service break, remains in contention to take over Martina Hingis' world number-one ranking.

But her latest injury makes American Lindsay Davenport a more dangerous threat to the Swiss player's status.

Williams now plays Sandrine Testud of France.

Testud was one of two French players to reach the

quarter-finals when she beat Germany's Anke Huber 6-2, 4-6, 6-2.

The other was seventh-seeded Nathalie Tauziat who repeated her Wimbledon semi-final victory over Natasha Zvereva of Belarus when she scored a 6-3, 6-2 win. Tauziat now faces second-seeded Davenport.

Venus Williams was disappointing and won only three games against the prim baseline accuracy of Dominique Van Roost who now plays top-seed Hingis.



Serena Williams

Beijing prepares for biggest marathon yet

BEIJING (AFP) — Beijing on Saturday will host its biggest marathon race yet with 19,000 runners starting from Tiananmen Square.

"The 1998 Beijing marathon will be the biggest ever in the meet's history in terms of the number of participants," said Shang Xiutang, general secretary of the Chinese Athletic Association.

He told the official Xinhua news agency that 19,422 runners from 30 countries had registered but only 914 athletes would contest the full 42.19 km.

Defending champion Hu Hangjun of China and Abebe Mekonnen of Ethiopia, who won the race in 1988, will both be competing.

With a course record set in 1986 of 2hr 07min 35sec, the prize money is \$20,000 for the mens race and \$10,000 for the women's race.



Willi Melliger of Switzerland on Calvaro V clears the barrier during the team showjumping competition at the 1998 World Equestrian Games in Rome (AP Photo)

Ferrari dismiss speculation, back Irvine

MILAN (AFP) — Ferrari president Luca di Montezemolo and top driver Michael Schumacher have dismissed speculation that the team are set to swap Eddie Irvine for Jean Alesi.

The Frenchman, who once partnered Gerhard Berger at Ferrari, has been linked by press reports with a return to the Italian team.

"But Montezemolo said: 'I have read some unbelievable things about Irvine in the papers — and they don't even deserve to be denied. It's like talking about things which happen on the moon.'"

"But then in 20 years with Ferrari, it's always been like this. And I would be surprised if it wasn't."

Schumacher said: "I don't think Eddie can go, he's got a contract for next year and I work well with him." But he added: "I admire Alesi, we are friends."

Ferrari are meanwhile concentrating on the last race of the season at Suzuka, which will decide whether world championship leader Mika Hakkinen or Schumacher wins the title.

"We are taking great care in our preparations for the race," said Montezemolo. "We can't do any more than what we're doing now, so however things go we cannot have any regrets whatever happens."

"And naturally, I can only hope it goes our way. We want to win the championship, and not just know that we did all we could. We must calm about things, but at the same time aim to win."

He went on: "Suzuka will be a lottery. Something could happen to us or to them, but I do think that Ferrari have paid their dues where bad luck is concerned recently."

"I'm expecting a great performance from the drivers, especially from Irvine, who did some exceptional things there last year and put us back in with a chance

of the world title."

Schumacher denied that he was happy just to be in with another shot this time around.

"I'm only happy when I win," said the former double world champion. "That's what counts, and throughout my career I've always competed with that in mind."

When the German joined Ferrari three seasons ago, his aim was to win the world title within three years.

"At that time, the car wasn't competitive, and it was very hard to keep up with the leading cars," Schumacher said. "But now we're always up at the front and we're also winning races. I hope to keep to my prediction."

And he insisted: "Everything is still up for grabs."

It's over for Giresse as PSG plump for Jorge

ST-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE, France (AFP) — Paris Saint Germain ended the agony for under-fire coach Alain Giresse on Thursday when they appointed former boss Artur Jorge as their new coach.

With the club mired in midtable after a disastrous season to date which saw them crash out of the Cup Winners Cup to Israel's Haifa Maccabi last week, the noise had already tightened around Giresse's neck.

The reign of the former French international forward, lasted barely three months. Other names in the frame for the job were Fabio Capello, formerly with AC Milan and Real Madrid, and Safet Susic, former striker with PSG and now with Turkey's Istanbulspor.

Jean-Claude Suaudeau, who won the championship with Nantes three years ago, had also been mentioned.

The 52-year-old Jorge, who coached Switzerland at Euro 96 and who was also former boss of Portugal, has been working at Holland's Vitesse Arnhem this season and he has taken them to second place in the league.

PSG president Charles Bierry plumped for Jorge because he sees him as the man to get results through firm discipline if not attacking football.

Jorge led PSG to the French title four years ago — largely through stout defending and judicious counter-attacking — but in doing so he won precious few fans. He departed after three seasons to be replaced by Luis Fernandez.

Fernandez promptly brought home the Cup Winners Cup in 1996 but then left for Bilbao.

Although Brazilian Ricardo won both domestic cups last year it was his failure to guide the club through the Champions League opening phase which proved his downfall.

PSG's Italian striker Marco Simone said he he was sorry for Giresse.

"I have spoken with him and there is little I can say," he said, adding: "Perhaps if I had not missed my penalty against Lens, things would have turned around for him. But that's football."

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMARA HIRECH
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HELD UP BY A HOLD-UP

North-South vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ QJ3
♥ J62
♦ A Q65
♣ Q63

WEST
♠ K652
♥ K9543
♦ 104
♣ J5

EAST
♠ 74
♥ A87
♦ J887
♣ 10887

SOUTH
♠ A1098
♥ Q10
♦ K52
♣ AK42

The bidding: WEST NORTH EAST
1NT Pass 3NT Pass

Opening lead: Four of ♠

One way for the defenders to return communication in a suit is to refrain from winning a trick at the first opportunity. But be sure the hold-up is necessary.

The auction was a simple matter of mathematics. North held 12 to South's maximum of 18, and the total fell short of what was required for slam. Little did North think that going might be beyond the reach of

the combined North-South assets. West led a low heart. East rose with the ace and returned the eight. To keep a link with the East hand, West allowed declarer's queen to hold the second trick. It was a decision the defender soon regretted.

With eight tricks in sight, declarer cashed three rounds of trumps, hoping for an even break. When that did not materialize, declarer tried the diamonds, ending in dummy. But again the most likely suit division existed.

With West marked with nothing but major-suit cards, declarer elected to spurn the spade finesse in favor of an endplay. West was thrown on lead with a heart and could score three heart tricks to complete the defensive book. But then West was forced to lead away from the king of spades into declarer's major tenace. Three no trumps bid and made.

Let us go back to the second trick. West should know that East cannot have anything of value that could pry a quick trick — almost all the high-card points were accounted for. West should simply have taken the king of hearts and cleared declarer's stopper. With only eight tricks available, declarer will have to take the spade finesse, and the defense will come to four heart tricks and the king of spades.

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL: 4634144	CINEMA TEL: 4634144	CINEMA TEL: 5699238	CINEMA TEL: 5677420	CINEMA TEL: 9934793	CINEMA TEL: 9934793	Hedham Yarns Theatre TEL: 4625155
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	Bruce Willis .. in LAST MAN STANDING Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Jennifer Tilly & Gina Gershon .. in BOUND Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Comedian Adel Imam .. in AL ZATEEM Shows: 6:30, 9:30 Additional shows Thursday and Friday evenings at 12:30	CONCORD '1' NASSER Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORD '2' UP CLOSE & PERSONAL Shows: 3:30, 5:30 only	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria ARMAGEDDON Shows: 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 10:45	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Lesley Nielsen .. in MR. MAGOO Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Watch out for the new play

Tickets on sale for Asian Games

BANGKOK (AFP) — Tickets for the 13th Asian Games in Thailand, December will go on sale across the region next week, organisers said Friday.

Around 14,700 tickets have been sold in Thailand for ceremonies at the end of the games, tickets for other events on sale at the end of the month, organisers said.

The December Asian Games will feature sports and all 43 member countries of the Asian Games Federation. The event is expected to be a success, as it has already cut the cost of their teams.

Ticket prices range from a quarter of a dollar to \$100, and go on sale from October 15.

More expensive card passes for the event, which allow spectators to pay taxi fares and for phone calls, will be available.



San Diego Padres' John Vander Wal, left, and Mark Sweeney, right congratulate Ken Caminiti on his tenth inning solo home run giving the Padres a 3-2 victory against the Atlanta Braves in the first game of the National League Championship series in Atlanta (AP Photo)

Brown gives Padres a 2-game lead over Braves

ATLANTA (AFP) — San Diego ace Kevin Brown dominated the Braves with a three-hitter here Thursday as the Padres beat Atlanta 3-0 and took a two-games-to-none lead in the National League Championship Series.

Brown, who beat the Braves twice in the 1997 NLCS while he was with the Florida Marlins, struck out 11.

Brown not only beat the Braves with his arm, he beat them with his bat. He had two singles, including a base hit in the sixth that pushed the game's first run into scoring position.

Atlanta starter Tom Glavine had a shutout for five innings, despite trouble in one inning after another. The left-hander, the only 20-game winner in the National League this season, walked six and gave up two doubles, throwing 121 pitches in just six innings.

In the sixth, Glavine finally got into some trouble he couldn't get out of.

Consecutive singles that barely escaped the infield by Chris Gomez, Brown and Quilvio Veras gave the Padres a 1-0 lead.

After John Rocker and Rudy Seanez each pitched a scoreless inning, 20-year-old Odalis Perez was hit hard in the ninth, surrendering a pair of runs and four hits. The Padres haven't needed much more than singles to win five of six games so far this postseason, which included taking three of four from the Houston Astros in the first round.

Buoyed by Brown's dominance, the Padres have an ERA of just 1.49 allowing just nine runs in 54.1 innings.

"I don't think I had quite the stuff I had that night," Brown said of his 16-strikeout performance against Houston. "But from the standpoint of just trying to make adjustments as the game went along and trying to use what was working at that moment, it was pretty good."

The Braves gave Glavine virtually no support. They had just three at bats with runners in scoring position and were 0-for-3. The heart of the Atlanta order — Chipper Jones, Andres Galarraga, Ryan Klesko, and Javier Lopez — were 1 for 12.

Galarraga is in a serious slump with just one home run in his last 80 at bats.

"You've got to try and keep as many of those guys off the bases as you can," Brown said. "This is a big win for us."

The best-of-seven series swings to San Diego for games three, four and five starting Saturday. The Braves' four-time Cy Young Award-winner Greg Maddux will try to give the Braves some traction in the series. Sterling Hitchcock will pitch for the Padres.

No team that has lost the first two games of the NLCS at home has ever come back to win the series.

"It wasn't long ago we were up 2-0 in the World Series and we ended up getting swept," Glavine said of the Yankees' come-from-behind World Series win two years ago. "We don't have to look any further than 1996 for inspiration."

Added Lopez, "We're not going to make it easy for them."



Abraham Olano of Spain speeds towards victory in the elite men's time trial race at the Cycling World Championships in Valkenburg, southern Netherlands (AP Photo)

Rusedski and Kafelnikov crash

By Roufan Nahhas

BASEL (AFP) — Defending champion Greg Rusedski, who had clearly left his usually reliable big serve at home, crashed out of the ATP's Swiss Indoor Championships here on Thursday when he was beaten 7-6 (7/4) 7-5 by David Prinosil.

The British No. 2 managed to put only 52 percent of his first serves into play — and he was "outaced" 14-8 by the German.

He was not the only seeded casualty.

Russia's fifth-seeded Yevgeny Kafelnikov also bowed out. The former French Open champion was beaten 3-6, 6-3, 7-5 by experienced Swede Magnus Gustafsson.

The elimination of Rusedski and Kafelnikov left only two seeds still in the draw.

Third seed Andre Agassi saw off home player Ivo Heuberger 6-2, 6-2 while sixth seeded Tim Henman of Britain eased past stylish Moroccan Hicham Arazi 6-4, 7-6 (7/4).

"I was really happy with how I served," said the British player, adding: "I made a lot of first serves at important times and made life difficult for him."

Henman now plays German Nicolas Kiefer who beat American Jeff Tarango 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Other second round winners included Frenchman Fabrice Santoro and Marc Rosset of Switzerland.

Santoro came back to defeat Daniel Vacek of the Czech Republic 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) while Rosset beat Wayne Ferreira of South Africa 6-4, 6-0.

Jordan's Ahli, Salt in Asian Clubs Championship

AMMAN — Jordan's Al Ahli and Al Salt handball clubs will face the ultimate challenge in the 1st Asian Clubs League Handball Championship which will take place here in Amman at the Sports Palace starting Oct. 20 with seven teams taking part.

President of the Jordan Handball Federation (JHF) Sari Hamdan expressed his happiness at hosting the ten-day event championship in the Kingdom.

"We are very happy at organising this event which we hope will provide us with the experience and the will to move forward with the game," Hamdan told the Jordan Times.

The event precedes the 20th Arab Clubs League Championship Nov. 4-14 in which Jordan's top two teams will also be taking part.

Schedule of matches:

Abhi vs. Iran's Zobhan Asfahan	Tues. Oct. 20	6:15 pm
Salt vs. UAE's Al Shareqia	Wed. Oct. 21	4:15 pm
China vs. Al Rayyan	Wed. Oct. 21	6:15 pm
Abhi vs. Al Rayyan	Thurs. Oct. 22	3:00 pm
Qazemah vs. UAE's Al Shareqia	Thurs. Oct. 22	4:45 pm
China vs. Iran's Zobhan	Thurs. Oct. 22	6:15 pm
China vs. Al Shareqia	Fri. Oct. 23	3:00 pm
Salt vs. Rayyan	Fri. Oct. 23	4:45 pm
Qazemah vs. Zobhan	Fri. Oct. 23	6:15 pm
Rayyan vs. Qazemah	Sun. Oct. 25	3:00 pm
Zobhan vs. Salt	Sun. Oct. 25	4:45 pm
Shareqia vs. Abhi	Sun. Oct. 25	6:15 pm
Shareqia vs. Zobhan	Mon. Oct. 26	3:00 pm
Qazemah vs. China	Mon. Oct. 26	4:45 pm
Salt vs. Abhi	Mon. Oct. 26	6:15 pm
Qazemah vs. Abhi	Tues. Oct. 27	3:00 pm
Salt vs. China	Tues. Oct. 27	4:45 pm
Rayyan vs. Shareqia	Tues. Oct. 27	6:15 pm
Qazemah vs. Salt	Thurs. Oct. 29	3:00 pm
Abhi vs. China	Thurs. Oct. 29	4:45 pm
Rayyan vs. Zobhan	Thurs. Oct. 29	6:15 pm

"Al Salt and Al Ahli are good teams and we are counting on them to develop the game and gain as much experience as they can in the coming events," he said.

Jordan's Al Salt and Al Ahli, Iran's Zobhan Asfahan, United Arab Emirates' Al Shareqia, China's army team, Qatar's Al Rayyan and Kuwait's Kathma will compete in the event," he added.

Meanwhile Kazakhstan and Syria declined from taking part in the event.

"Al Ahli are expected to have a tough

time against Iran's champions in the opening match but we are all confident that they will do their best," Hamdan said following the draw.

Al Salt will meet UAE's Al Shareqia in their first match.

Qatar's Al Rayyan will have a training camp in Amman during which they will play several matches with other Jordanian teams," he said.

Hamdan pointed out that the federation was studying the latest disap-

pointing results of the handball national team in the 1st Arab Cup Championship in Cairo.

"We came in the ninth place among eleven countries who took part in the event," he said. This result disappointed us," he added.

"Our national team is simply not ready," he added.

He said the federation was now planning an agenda for the national team to seriously prepare for future events.

Edberg does Britain no favours in Davis Cup draw

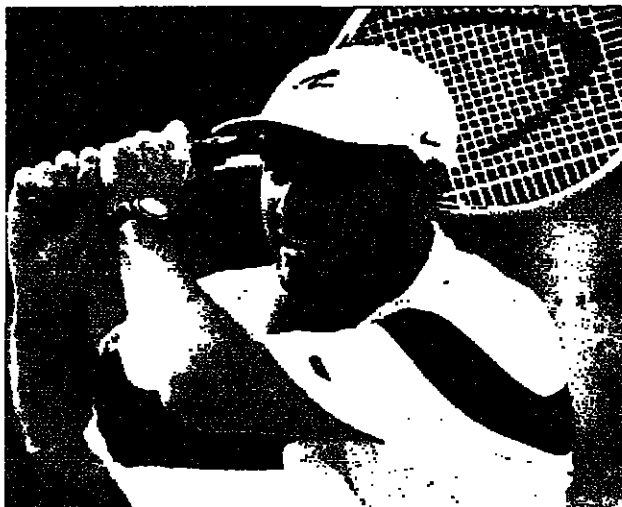
LONDON (AFP) — Britain were given the toughest possible tie on their return to the Davis Cup World Group after a six-year absence here Thursday when former world number-one Stefan Edberg drew the United States as their first-round opponents.

The London-based Swede, who won six Grand Slam singles crowns during his illustrious career, was gentler with his compatriots.

He drew the defending champions and this year's finalists to play Slovakia — at home.

It will be a repeat of this year's first-round match when Sweden just managed to win 3-2 in Slovakia. In the other World Group matches, to be played from April 2-4 next year, Australia are away to Zimbabwe and France will play hosts to Holland.

Spain also have a home draw against Brazil, the Czech Republic must travel to Belgium, Switzerland



Andre Agassi

welcome the Italians and Germany have home advantage against Russia.

Britain's Greg Rusedski, who would partner Tim Henman in the British team, said: "I think it will be an interesting tie."

The Canadian-born British

No. 2, who packs the world's biggest serve and who was the world's fourth-ranked player twelve months ago, added: "It will be interesting to see which team the Americans bring — the one that lost against Italy in the 1998 semi-finals or the one which features Andre Agassi

and Pete Sampras." John Crowther of the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) claimed: "Whatever team the United States puts out — we have an excellent chance. It should be a feast of tennis for the fans."

Because of the date for the tie, grass will be ruled out and Britain will probably opt for a fast indoor court.

American captain Tom Gullikson and the United States Tennis Association now have six months to try to tempt back their star players.

Sampras, Agassi and Michael Chang all made themselves "unavailable" for this year's semi-final against Italy which the Americans lost 1-4 in Milwaukee.

History will be weighted in favour of the Americans who have won the trophy 31 times and reached the final on 28 occasions. Britain's ninth and last victory in the competition came back in 1936.

Italians face Swiss tonight

UDINE, Italy (AFP) — Italy are counting on Alessandro Del Piero to put five months of misery behind him here on Saturday night when they face Switzerland in a Euro 2000 qualifier.

Del Piero had the best goalscoring season of his career in 1997-98, but he faded badly towards the end and took his poor form to the European Cup final and then on to the World Cup finals.

Both ended in disappointment and the 23-year-old hasn't scored in open play since. To make matters worse, he has faced allegations of drug use at Juventus and the inevitable taunts from rival fans.

"I know this wasn't the best time to face the worst crisis of my career, and I know that my relationship with opposing fans has to be re-built," he said.

"But you can't choose when these periods of crisis are going to come. They just come, and that's all there is to it. I've no choice but to work hard and pull through it as soon as possible."

He went on: "A 1,000 things influence your performance, and I'm working on the 500 which aren't going right for me. I'm telling myself in training and in matches to keep doing the same things I did when everything was fine."

The most recent upset was missing a sitter in Juventus' draw away to Rosenborg in the European Champions League.

"It was an incredibly easy goal I missed at Trondheim," he said. "And the move was identical to one I'd done the night before in a training match in the very same goal: take the ball on the right, dribble the keeper and knock it in."

"Only I hadn't counted on there being a divot, which gave the ball a completely different bounce. People expect Del Piero to dribble and eight times out of ten I manage it. But at the moment it's more like two out of ten."

Del Piero denied that a goal would solve his problems at a stroke.

"But it would certainly help," he said. "And I am certainly hoping to score one on Saturday night."

Dino Zoff, facing his first home game since becoming national coach, has the same faith in Del Piero as his luckless predecessor, Cesare Maldini.

"Del Piero may not be 100 percent but he is certainly useful," Zoff said. "There are players who are good to have even at 70 percent of their potential, because of the sheer quality of their perfor-

mances.

"I'd be happy if he was at the level he showed against Wales," he said. "For me, Del Piero is not a problem."

Zoff, who started his pro career here with Udinese in 1961, will almost certainly pick Juventus teammate Filippo Inzaghi as Del Piero's partner.

The two men struck up a 60-goal partnership last year, although Zoff also wants to blood one of his new youngsters — Nicola Ventola or Francesco Totti.

The midfield will probably be handled by Luigi Di Biagio, backed by Diego Fuser, who scored in the 2-0 win over the Welsh at Anfield, and Dino Baggio.

In defence, skipper Paolo Maldini joins Giacinto Facchetti as Italy's second most capped international of all time on 94. The 30-year-old AC Milan defender still has time to catch recordholder Zoff on 112.

Parma's 20-year-old phenomenon Gianluigi Buffon will be between the posts, in place of the injured Angelo Peruzzi.

Italian drugs storm hits Olympic bid

MILAN (AFP) — Turin's chances of hosting the 2006 Winter Games have been hit by the recent drugs scandal involving Italy's Olympic committee (CONI), the bid organisers said on Friday.

Inspectors from the International Olympic Committee will be in Turin for three days next week to evaluate the city's bid.

But the resignation of CONI president Mario Pescante over the doping scandal in soccer, and the fact that the entire remaining CONI leadership could be disbanded at any moment by Deputy Prime Minister Walter Veltroni, will not be lost on the IOC officials.

"Until two weeks ago, the distance which separated Turin from the favourites Sion (Switzerland) for the 2006 Winter Games had been reduced," said bid committee chief Evelina Christillin here.

"But today, after the scandal which has hit the CONI, the situation has worsened markedly, there's no point denying it," Christillin added.

The latest blow to Italy's already battered image came on Wednesday, when the IOC closed down the CONI-approved laboratory at Acqua Acetosa which has been at the centre of the doping scandal.

Christillin is hoping that time will ease things for the northern city, claiming: "The CONI affair does not worry us all that much. We are confident that things will have been sorted out by the time the IOC votes."

The IOC will make its decision at a meeting in Seoul on June 19 next year. Aside from Turin and Sion, the other four candidates for the Games are Helsinki (Finland) in a joint bid with Lillehammer (Norway), Zakopane (Poland), Poprad Tatry (Slovakia) and Klagenfurt (Austria).

If Turin is successful, the Italian Government has agreed to invest one trillion lira (\$625 million) in preparing for the event, split evenly between sports facilities and building/transport.

The cost of running the Olympics has been estimated at 1.4 trillion lira (\$875 million) — half of which would be met by the CONI and half from ticket sales and other sources.

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Berbers demonstrate in remembrance of murdered popular singer Lounes Matoub in his hometown on Friday in this northeastern Kabylie region's town. Matoub, 42, who was gunned down in an ambush last June 25, was a sharp critic of both the Alger authorities and Muslim guerrillas (Reuters photo)

No links between Afghans in Kashmir and Osama Ben Laden, army chief says

SRINAGAR (AP) — Afghan volunteers are fighting in India's troubled Kashmir, but they had no apparent link with Saudi renegade Osama Ben Laden, the army commander said Friday.

"The Pakistan army is playing a major role in militancy in Kashmir," General Ved Prakash Malik told reporters in Srinagar, the summer capital of India's Jammu-Kashmir state.

But there was "no linkage between Afghan militants operating in Kashmir and Ben Laden," he said.

Malik's comments came less than a week after a British newspaper claimed Afghanistan-based Ben Laden was mobilising Afghan Islamists to fight in Kashmir. The United States accuses Ben Laden of

financing Islamist strikes against U.S. targets around the world. Islamists have been fighting a secessionist war in India-controlled Kashmir since 1989 that has left more than 15,000 people dead.

India and Pakistan have fought two wars for control of Kashmir in the past 50 years. Malik accused Pakistan of arming and training Muslim activists. "We shall not permit proxy war on our soil by the militants," Pakistan denies India's charge and says it merely provides moral and political support to the insurgency.

The army chief also said tension on the Afghanistan-Iran border was a matter of concern for all countries in the region.

Panel delivers judgement on disputed Red Sea islands

NAIROBI (AFP) — Eritrea and Yemen both announced Friday that an international arbitration panel had delivered a judgement on their dispute over islands in the Red Sea, but their accounts differed.

In Sanaa, Yemeni Prime Minister Abdul Karim Al Iniyani said in a message to President Ali Abdullah Saleh that "the panel unanimously ruled on Friday that the Republic of Yemen had sovereignty over the disputed islands," the official news agency Saba reported.

In Nairobi, the Eritrean embassy issued a foreign ministry statement saying the panel had awarded some islands to Yemen and others to Eritrea.

"The government of Eritrea, as it has stated consistently, will abide by the decision," it said.

The Eritrean statement said the panel had found the Mohabbakah islands, including Sayid Islet, Harbi Islet and High Islet, the Haycock islands, and Southwest Rocks

islands to be subject to the sovereignty of Eritrea.

The panel ruled that the Zuqar-Hanish, Abu-Ali, Jabal Al Tayr and Zubayr islands to be subject to the sovereignty of Yemen, it said.

Eritrea and Yemen claimed in December 1995 when Eritrean troops took over the island of Greater Hanish, claimed by both countries.

But on May 21, 1996, they signed a French-brokered accord to seek international arbitration over the Hanish archipelago, whose sovereignty had not been established.

The tribunal was established by mutual agreement after the accord was signed.

The islands are located in the Red Sea close to the Gulf of Aden, and control access to the Bab Al Mandab Strait.

Sanaa claimed to have inherited the archipelago from the Ottoman Empire, while Asmara said that its sovereignty of the islands had been established "under the Italian, British and Ethiopian occupations" of Eritrea.

Islamists hold more protests against Taslima Nasrin

DHAKA (AP) — Nearly 1,000 Islamists took to the streets after Friday prayers demanding death to controversial author Taslima Nasrin.

The protest was intended to keep up the pressure on the authorities to find and arrest Nasrin on blasphemy charges.

Conservative Islamic groups began the campaign after the essayist and poet ended a four-year voluntary exile to care for her ailing mother.

"Hang the enemy of Islam to death," chanted the protesters as they emerged from Dhaka's main Baitul Mukurram Mosque wearing white prayer caps.

They belonged to Islami

Oikya Jote, an alliance of several conservative Islamic groups, which has offered 2,000 takas (\$5,000) to anyone who kills 36-year-old Nasrin.

Nasrin was targeted after a newspaper quoted her as saying in 1994 that the Koran, the Islamic holy book, should be rewritten.

She later said she was misquoted, but openly called for changes in strict Islamic laws to give more rights to women.

Nasrin has been in hiding since returning in September from Europe and America.

She is on bail from charges brought by the state, but she is wanted in a civil suit that accuses her of offending sentiments of Muslims in

her book, "Nirbachito Column" or Selected Columns, a compilation of her newspaper writings.

"I fear I'll be killed by the extremists if I appear in public," she told the Associated Press in a telephone interview on Thursday from her hide-out.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said the author should surrender to court and answer the charges. Nasrin said she was exploring the possibility of her attorneys representing her during court hearings.

"I'm definitely going to stay here until my mother dies," she said in the telephone interview.

Taleban say all is calm on Iran front

KABUL (R) — Afghanistan's Taleban Islamist movement said that the country's western border with Iran was peaceful on Friday, a day after Iran reported bloody clashes there, but warned that it might not remain so.

"The border is calm today," Taleban spokesman Abdul Hai Mutmaen told Reuters.

Iran said on Thursday that it had repelled a Taleban attack on its border.

A cross-border attack by the Taleban militia constituting a flagrant aggression and provocation was repelled and military operation was halted," Iran said in a letter to the United Nations, saying its response was "limited and proportionate."

The Taleban denied they had launched any attacks, and counter-accused that Iran had shelled Afghan positions. The Taleban had shown restraint in not responding, they said.

"The Taleban have not fired back at Iranian artillery which has been firing at Afghan territory for the last three days," a Taleban spokesman said.

Mutmaen said they might not show such restraint for much longer. "If we have more repeats of Iran's attacks, then our patience will run out."

U.N. special envoy on Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi arrived in Islamabad from Tehran on Thursday night for talks with Pakistani government officials and Taleban representatives as part of his efforts to defuse the border crisis.

"Our message is quite clear that we are following restraint and that will be our message to Ibrahim," Taleban spokesman Abdul Hai Mutmaen told Reuters.

Ibrahim said he would not visit the Taleban in Afghanistan until the United Nations had received satisfactory assurances of security from the Taleban. A U.N. military observer was shot and fatally wounded in Kabul in August.

Mutmaen said there was no security hindrance for Ibrahim's visit, for which he has been invited to the Taleban headquarters in the southern city of Kandahar.

Ibrahim's visit to Kandahar "is an important issue and there is no security problem at all for his visit," Mutmaen said.

Ibrahim, a former Algerian foreign minister, is visiting the region amid mounting tension between Tehran and the Taleban movement that controls more than 95 per cent of Afghanistan.

Iran has deployed some 200,000 troops along the Afghan border. Tehran is demanding that the Taleban hand over for trial those responsible for the killings of eight Iranian diplomats and a reporter in the northern Afghan town of Mazar-e-Sharif when the Taleban captured it from opposition forces in August.

Iran also wants a Taleban apology for the killings and immediate release of more than 40 Iranian prisoners. The

Taleban say the Iranians were killed by renegade militiamen acting without orders and have promised they will be punished.

"Our demand in the talks with Ibrahim would be immediate solution to the growing problem with Iran," Mutmaen said.

"Whoever has said to Ibrahim that it is not safe [for him to travel to Afghanistan], has told him a lie," he said. "Our main topic of talks will be that how the U.N. can stop Iranian and Russian interference. That is the solution and the diagnosis of the disease if it wants to solve the crisis." Ibrahim said on Thursday night he was still optimistic about his efforts to ease tension between Iran and Taleban despite the reports of border clashes.

"I hope that it [the report] is exaggerated by the press... and that it will be contained... I am still optimistic," he told reporters on Thursday night on his arrival in Islamabad from Tehran.

He said he had held "very, very good discussions" in Tehran. "We have gone into all the details of the situation," he said, declining to give details. "But I can tell you that I have come here reasonably optimistic." He said the standoff was serious, "but there is also a very good chance to make progress and move away from the dangers of this situation towards a better, satisfactory resolution of the problems..."

Kharrazi arrives in Turkey to mediate Syrian crisis

ANKARA (AP) — Iran's foreign minister held talks with Turkish officials in Ankara Friday in a bid to defuse a mounting crisis between Turkey and Syria over Kurdish rebels.

Turkey issued an ultimatum to Syria this week, demanding that Damascus expel Turkish Kurdish rebels from its territory or "face the consequences." Turkish reports suggested air strikes on suspected rebel bases in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley of Lebanon were possible.

Syria denies the accusations. Turkey's warlike rhetoric has raised fears of a regional conflict.

Later on Friday, Turkey's chief of general staff, president, prime minister and for-

eign minister were scheduled to meet on the crisis.

Iran's Kamal Kharrazi held talks with his Turkish counterpart Ismail Cem and President Suleyman Demirel.

"If everything goes right, there may soon be a peaceful settlement of the situation," Kharrazi told reporters after having a lunch with Cem. "But it is early to speculate on that." On Thursday, Kharrazi discussed the problem with Syrian President Hafez Assad in Damascus.

Private NTV Television said on Friday that Kharrazi could be bringing a message from Assad.

Kharrazi said in Ankara that "the important thing is to search for a peaceful solution to the crisis. It is the wish of all Muslim countries." Iran

entered mediation efforts in its role as the head of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, a 55-member group that includes Syria and Turkey. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak also shuttled between the two countries earlier this week.

But Turkey has accused Iran of also turning a blind eye to the Kurdish rebel presence on its territory along the Turkish border.

"The rebels enter Iranian territory from northern Iraq and stage cross-border attacks from there," Deputy Premier Bulent Ecevit told reporters on Thursday.

Cem thanked Iran for its "brotherly efforts." Turkish authorities have made clear their preference for a diplomatic solution, but Premier

Mesut Yilmaz said ending the tension was up to Syria.

Relations between Syria and Turkey have always been troublesome. Syria is concerned by Ankara's plans to build dams on the Euphrates River — a main source of water for Syria. The recent boost in Israeli-Turkish military and diplomatic relations has also angered Damascus, and several Arab countries.

The Turkish-Kurdish war has claimed some 37,000 lives since 1984.

Ankara has asked Syria to extradite rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan, who resides in Damascus according to Turkish intelligence reports. Turkey also wants Syria to put an end to its support to the rebels, who are fighting for autonomy within Turkey.

Peres sees agreement with Palestinians next week

NEW YORK (AFP) — Former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres predicted Thursday that an interim agreement between Israel and Palestinians would be reached next week at a U.S.-brokered summit.

"I'm so sure an agreement will be reached," Peres said, referring to next Thursday's planned meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian National Authority chief Yasser Arafat and U.S. President Bill Clinton.

"I'm glad it's happening," said Peres, who was instrumental in hammering out the Oslo interim accords which brought about the original, but now stalled, negotiations between the two sides.

He lamented the fact, though, that the agreement was supposed to have been reached 18 months ago before talks broke down.

"I can't see any real advantage" in having stalled the talks, he told a conference organized here by Tel Aviv University on "Peace, Tolerance and Understanding."

Hoping to restart the peace talks which have been deadlocked for 19 months, Washington arranged the three-way summit in the state of Maryland in the hope of reaching a new interim peace deal.

The United States also hopes to push the

Israelis and the Palestinians into talks on a final peace accord.

Yet, Peres, noting that the Oslo accords have a May 4, 1999 expiration date, showed only guarded optimism about reaching a final peace agreement.

"I think there is a long way with difficult choices," Peres said of reaching a settlement. He added he believed there was a need to create a Palestinian state for security reasons and "keep Israel Jewish."

"If they don't have 100 per cent freedom we don't have a 100 per cent security," Peres said.

In his remarks to the conference, Peres also stressed a need to embrace the Muslim World while tackling with "extremism and fundamentalism."

"We need to extinguish the flames" that could ignite conflict, he said, adding that there are a lot of "poor, bitter, extreme and armed" people in the world.

The U.S. package deal at the centre of next week's talks calls for further Israeli withdrawal from 13 per cent of the West Bank in exchange for tougher Palestinian action against Islamists.

The summit was announced Wednesday by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright after talks with Arafat and Netanyahu.

Arafat wraps up Russian visit

MOSCOW (AP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, who has called on Russia to play a larger role in Middle East peacekeeping, held talks with parliament leaders on Friday, wrapping up a two-day visit.

Communist Party chief Gennady Zyuganov, who was among those who met with Arafat, said their talks were "interesting and mutually beneficial." "We discussed all problems — Russian and Middle East — over a cup of tea," Zyuganov said at a news conference.

Arafat met with President Boris Yeltsin and Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov on Thursday and invited Russia to Middle East peace talks in Washington next week as a co-sponsor of the Mideast peace process.

Yeltsin said his government might be interested in participating in the talks, scheduled to open outside Washington on Oct. 15. But he said Russia first wants to know the views of Israel and the United States on the plan.

Russia is officially a co-sponsor of the peace process launched by a conference in Madrid, Spain, in 1991. But the United States has played a far greater role.

Arafat arrived in Moscow following talks in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright that raised hopes that the stalled peace process could move ahead.

Arafat was headed to Finland from Russia.

Churchill's letters to wife go on display

LONDON (AP) — A selection of letters spanning the 56-year marriage of Winston and Clementine Churchill went on display Friday, offering a window on a relationship that bolstered the late British leader during the burden and stresses of war. Fifteen of the thousands of letters the couple wrote to each other from their marriage in 1908 until Churchill's death in 1965 will be on display at the Cabinet War Rooms in London until February. "There is what you would expect from Churchill," telling Clementine about political affairs of state, said Phil Reed, the War Room's curator.

McCartney's death doubles cancer charity calls

LONDON (AP) — Linda McCartney's death from breast cancer earlier this year had a "staggering" impact on women living in fear of the disease, a leading cancer charity says in this week's British Medical Journal. During the week after the wife of former Beatle Paul McCartney died, the number of daily calls to Cancer BACUP doubled, said the charity's chief executive, Jean Mossman. Calls relating to breast cancer in particular went up 64 per cent, she said. "This surge in demand shows just how powerful an effect a celebrity's death can have on the public."

Restaurant attacked for using naked models

BONN (R) — A German restaurant has been attacked as "tasteless" for serving sushi on naked models lying on top of tables. Brigitte Vollmer-Schubert, ombudsman for women's issues in the central city of Hanover, said she was appalled that the restaurant used naked women as huge "platters" for the Japanese dish, dubbed "sushi ala Jungfrau [virgin]." But the restaurant owner was quoted by Bild newspaper as saying the dish had been a huge hit and the evening-long meal, costing up to \$250 per person, was booked out for weeks in advance.

Baseball fan drowns amid celebrations

TOKYO (R) — A jubilant Japanese baseball fan drowned when he jumped off a bridge into a river in celebration of his team's first Central League title in 38 years. The unidentified man in his 30s jumped into the Aratama River near Yokohama Stadium, following the Yokohama BayStars 4-3 victory over Osaka team Hanshin Tigers to take the pennant. Several other fans took the plunge with him. Fire department rescuers managed to pull the man from the river but he died in hospital a short time later. There were no other casualties. The Yokohama Fire Department said.

Teacher fired for handing out 'sex-dollars'

CHARLOTTE (R) — A substitute teacher was fired for handing out bogus "sex-dollar" bills parodying U.S. President Bill Clinton's affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky, school officials said. The bills were distributed by the teacher as "prizes" to students at the John Chavis Middle School in Gaston County, North Carolina, said school spokeswoman Bonnie Reidy. "This was unacceptable behaviour and the substitute teacher has been dismissed."

Two guerrillas killed in Syria

rafat ages increased pressure in Israel